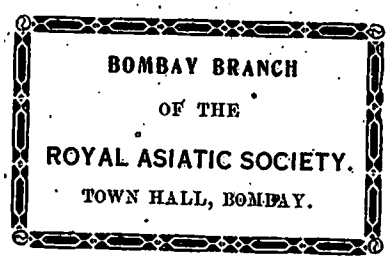
00020012

NOT TO BE ISSUED
OUT OF THE LIBRARY.



Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 19 September, 2016

QUEENS OF SONG:

BEING MEMOIRS OF SOME OF THE MOST

CELEBRATED FEMALE VOCALISTS

WHO HAVE APPEARED ON THE LYRIC STAGE, FROM THE EARLIEST DAYS OF OPERA TO THE PRESENT TIME.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF ALL THE OPERAS

THAT HAVE BEEN PERFORMED IN EUROPE.

By ELLEN CREATHORNE CLAYTON.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

20012
ae

WITH SIX PORTRAITS.

X X. 2. 14

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

M.DCCC.LXIII.

[*The right of Translation is reserved.*]

927.84
Claque
20012

TO

MADAME VIARDOT GARCIA,

This Work

IS DEDICATED BY PERMISSION,

AS A TESTIMONY OF THE ESTEEM AND ADMIRATION OF

HER OBLIGED AND FAITHFUL SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

CHAP.		PAGE
	INTRODUCTION	vii
I.	KATHERINE TOFTS AND MARGARITA DE L'EPINE .	1
II.	ANASTASIA ROBINSON (COUNTESS OF PETERBOROUGH) .	20
III.	LAVINIA FENTON (DUCHESS OF BOLTON) . . .	34
IV.	EARLY FRENCH SINGERS.—MARTHE LE ROCHOIS—LA MAUPIN	47
V.	RIVAL QUEENS—FRANCESCA CUZZONI AND FAUSTINA BORDONI	62
VI.	CATERINA MINGOTTI	80
VII.	CATERINA GABRIELLI	94
VIII.	SOPHIE ARNOULD	110
IX.	ANTOINETTE CÉCILE CLAVEL ST. HUBERTY . .	129
X.	GERTRUDE ELIZABETH MARA	139
XI.	ANNA MARIA CROUCH	186
XII.	ANNA SELINA STORACE	208
XIII.	ELIZABETH BILLINGTON	229
XIV.	GIUSEPPA GRASSINI	262
XV.	ANGELICA CATALANI	279
XVI.	JOSEPHINE MAINVILLE FODOR	329
XVII.	LAURE CINTHIE DAMOREAU	342
XVIII.	VIOLANTE CAMPORESE	354
XIX.	ROSAMUNDA PISARONI	370

INTRODUCTION.

THE following work is addressed less to those who make the Art and Science of Music the subject of systematic study—though even to them it may perhaps prove acceptable—than to the increasing number of persons who regard music as an elegant accomplishment, entering largely into the enjoyments of refined and cultivated society, and who are interested in the fame and fortunes of its most favourite and fascinating interpreters.

Love of an art creates love of the artist. We cannot be moved, excited, transported by the poetry of Shakspeare, and yet take no interest in himself. We desire to know all about him that can be known, and eagerly receive every scrap of information that can be gathered as to the life and fortunes, the character, habits, manners, and domestic relations of the man whose writings we so dearly cherish.

Akin to the interest we take in the great dramatic poet is that which we take in the great dramatic musician. We feel for a Mozart as we do for a Shakspeare. And not less lively is our personal sympathy with the professors of that beautiful art which interprets and embellishes—which realizes and brings before our senses—the grand and beautiful conceptions of the dramatic poet and composer.

The biography of the actor has a great and peculiar attraction of its own. The actor is pre-eminently "the abstract and brief chronicle of the time." The narrative of his career throws light not only on his own life and character, but on the life and character of the society in which he moves, and the age to which he belongs. And this seems to be most especially the case with the female members of the theatrical profession; particularly if the lyrical stage is that on which they have flourished. A great actress stands more prominently in the world's eye, has a greater influence on manners, and reflects more strongly the prevailing hues of society, than an actor can do; and of the great actresses who have adorned the stage since its revival in modern Europe, the larger number have also been great singers.

This consideration has induced the author to take,

for the subjects of the following biographical sketches, a select number of the "QUEENS OF SONG" who have shed lustre on the musical stage of Italy, France, Germany, and England.

It was in Italy that Opera came into being: from thence she travelled, first into France, next into England, and lastly, into Germany; where, notwithstanding her present magnitude, her existence is but of yesterday. Go back only to the days of Glück, and we find that, though there was opera in Germany, there was no German opera. To him, and to his still greater successor, Mozart, the Germans are indebted for the very creation of their own musical drama.

It is only in those four countries that a national opera can be said to exist. In each of them the musical stage has acquired distinctive peculiarities; but in all of them it retains the principal features which it has derived from Italy, the land of its birth. Composers and performers have been natives of other countries—Spain, Russia, Sweden, or Denmark; but they have all been formed chiefly on the school of Italy, and, in some degree, on those of France and Germany. As to England, she is beginning to have

a school; but beyond our own shores English Opera has no influence.

To write a series of memoirs of the great female opera singers, would be almost equivalent to writing a history of the Opera itself, and perhaps in the most pleasant form which such a history could assume. But a work of this kind, were it anything more than a bare and dry outline, would necessarily grow to an impracticable size; for such has been the European popularity of the most captivating branch of the drama, that the number of female singers, who have not only been the idols of the public in their own day, but have acquired lasting posthumous fame, is greater than that of all other eminent theatrical performers put together. For one Barry, Clairon, Siddons, or O'Neill, there are twenty Maras, Pastas, or Malibrans. A very limited selection from their number was therefore necessary. But it has been thought that even such a selection, carefully made and arranged, might embrace a continuous and coherent picture of the progress of the Opera, as well as of the constantly changing aspects of social life in the countries where the Opera has flourished.

Every "Queen of Song" is the central figure in a

group of all that is great, and noble, and gay—and too often, unhappily, dissolute—in the society in which she moves. Her story is often of touching and romantic interest, and her fate points an impressive moral lesson. Gifted with powers designed to delight the world, and in most instances combined with personal attractions, that materially enhance the charms of vocal and histrionic efforts, the young débutante, emerging from the severe labour of her musical studies, enters at once on the dazzling but dangerous scene of her future triumphs; endued with sensibility of no ordinary kind, refined by the cultivation of her voice and ear, and often with the strong and wayward impulses of genius.

Her first success in a moment transforms the chrysalis into the butterfly, destined to flutter in the blaze of theatrical splendours. Fascinating the public, and gratifying the intellectual lovers of song, while her beauty and powers remain in their full perfection, the fair and accomplished young vocalist cannot but captivate many hearts, and thus becomes surfeited by the flatteries of the spoiled children of fortune, and lured by the wiles of subtle and interested admirers. The intoxication of success following close upon the absorbing studies, and the doubts and fears that beset the débutante, must be a severe trial to the sensitive

and ardent young creature, who, when acknowledged as "prima donna," finds the world at her feet, and is the cynosure of the great, the gifted, and the wealthy of society.

As the interpreter of the ideas of genius, she partakes of the triumphs of the composer, and is rewarded not only by munificent payment, but with the incense of popular applause and the homage of admirers; never appearing but to elicit fresh tokens of admiration.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the temptations of such a career should sometimes prove too great for virtue or prudence to resist; indeed, the wonder is, that so many favourite singers have escaped the snares and pitfalls that surround their steps. The descent from the pinnacle of fame and fortune is often sudden and disastrous, and the perils of her who attains the giddy height of popularity, are such as to need a cool head and a steadfast heart, and the controlling power of high principle.

The author has chosen her heroines with a view to a twofold source of interest. She has taken those whose genius and labours have stamped the deepest impress on the state of contemporary art, and some of those,

likewise, who, though of secondary artistic name, have had eventful histories; or from whose fortunes, in their brilliant and most perilous career, an instructive moral may be gathered. How far she has succeeded it will remain for others to judge.

She has been careful to draw her facts from the most trustworthy sources; from the most eminent historians of music and musical biographers; from contemporary memoirs and works on other subjects, in which the Opera and its celebrities are incidentally spoken of; and (in the latter portion of the work) from the information kindly furnished to her from several "Queens of Song," who are the brightest ornaments of the present musical stage. The dates have been (from about 1750) verified from the public journals of England, France, and Germany.

It will be observed that, in regard to the heroines of past generations, she has, in describing their persons, manners, and the peculiar features of their vocal talents, freely availed herself of the language of contemporary criticism. Actors and singers are not like poets and painters; they leave no works behind them from which we can form our own estimate of their character. We know nothing but what is told us by their contem-

poraries; and the author has thought it better to choose those contemporaries carefully, and to quote their own lively and graphic descriptions, (always acknowledging the source from which they are drawn,) than to translate them, as it were, into what would necessarily have been feebler and less picturesque words of her own.

She takes this opportunity of again tendering thanks to those friends in both London and Paris who have given her so much valuable assistance, and to whom she feels deeply indebted; also of acknowledging the courtesy of those gentlemen to whom she has, from time to time, been obliged to apply for special information.

LIST OF AUTHORITIES.

The following are the principal Works from which the Materials for the "QUEENS OF SONG" have been drawn :—

Allegemeine Musikalische Zeitung.

D'AUBERTEUIL et DROUTIN—Costumes et Annales des Grands Théâtres de Paris, 1786-89.

BACHAUMONT—Mémoires Sécrets.

JOHN BERNARD—Retrospection of the Stage.

HENRI BEYLE—Vie de Rossini.

CASTIL BLAZE—L'Académie Impériale de Musique.

CHARLES DE BOIGNE—Petits Mémoires de l'Opéra.

DR. BURNEY—General History of Music: Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, &c. (1773): Present State of Music in France and Italy (1773): Account of the Musical Performances in Westminster Abbey and the Pantheon.

THOMAS BUSBY—General History of Music: Concert-room and Orchestra.

H. F. CHORLEY—Music and Manners in France and Germany: Modern German Music, Recollections, and Criticism: Thirty Years' Musical Recollections.

CHORON ET FAYOLLE—Dictionnaire Historique des Musiciens.

Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber.

CLEMENT et L'ABBÉ JOSEPH DE LA PORTE—Anecdotes Dramatiques.

CROSSE—Account of the Grand Musical Festival held in 1823 in York.

CHARLES DIBDEN—Complete History of the English Stage.

DIDOT—Nouveau Biographie Générale.

EBERS—Seven Years of the King's Theatre.

Encyclopédie des Gens du Monde.

ESCUDIER FRÈRES—Etudes Biographiques sur les Chanteurs Contemporains.

FÉTIS—Biographie des Musiciens.

MADAME FUSIL—Mémoires d'une Jeune Actrice.

Galerie Théâtrale.—Galerie des Artistes Dramatiques.—Le Monde Dramatique.—Galerie des Hommes du Jour.

GRIMM—Correspondence.

HAWKINS—General History of Music.

CHARLES HERVEY—Theatres of Paris.

Edward Holmes—Life of Mozart.
George Hogarth—Memoirs of the Musical Drama: Musical History, Biography, and Criticism.
Gerber—Historisch Biographischus Lexicon der Tonkunstler.
Arsène Houssaye—Galerie des Portraits.
Michael Kelly—Reminiscences.
Earl of Malmesbury—Diaries and Correspondence.
Mémoires de Marmontel.
Martini—Storia della Musica, 1757, *et seq.*
Mémoires Sécrets—1777.
Countess de Merlin—Memoirs of Madame Malibran.
Michaud—Biographie Universelle.
Eugène de Mirecourt—Les Contemporains.
Lord Mount Edgecumbe—Musical Reminiscences of an old Amateur.
Durey de Noinville—Histoire de l'Académie Royale de Musique en France—1757.
J. Nathan—Memoirs of Madame Malibran de Beriot.
Roger North—Memoirs of Musick.
G. Orloff—Essai sur l'Histoire de la Musique en Italie.
W. Oxberry—Dramatic Biography and Histrionic Anecdotes.
W. J. Parke—Musical Memoirs.
Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review.
Schilling—Das Musikalische Europa, etc.—Universal Lexicon der Tonkunst.
Victor Schoelcher—Life of Handel.
Scudo—L'Année Musicale—Critique et Littérature Musicales—Musique Ancienne et Moderne.
Arthur Simpson—Memoirs of Madame Catalani.
Vaporeau—Dictionnaire Universelle des Contemporains.
Véron—Mémoires d'un Bourgeois de Paris.
Domenico Ventimiglia—Biografia di V. Belini, 1835.
Walpole—Private Correspondence.
M. F. Young—Memoirs of Mrs. Crouch.
&c. &c. &c.

PORTRAITS.

Mrs. Billington. (*From a Print after Downman*).
Madame Pasta. (*From a Drawing by John Hayter*).
Madame Grisi. (*From a Photograph*).
Madame Garcia Malibran. (*From a Drawing by Grevedon*).
Madame Viardot Garcia. (*From a Photograph*).
Madame Clara Novello. (*From a Photograph*)

QUEENS OF SONG.

CHAPTER I.

KATHERINE TOFTS AND MARGARITA DE L'EPINE.

We class these two ladies together, because they were the earliest "Queens of Song" who reigned in England, were contemporaries, and much connected in their career on the musical stage. It was but a little before their time that actresses began to make their appearance, female characters of every kind having been personated by men. Before their time English Opera gave no employment to great singers. Even the operas of Purcell were little more than plays intermixed with music, consisting of occasional choruses and songs, and in which the actors of the drama took no part. It was only when the Italian opera came to be introduced in England, and to be imitated by English composers, that eminent dramatic singers began to appear; and among these the first females were Mrs. Tofts and Madame de l'Epine.

Of the family or early career of Katherine Tofts, little is known. Her name is first mentioned, we believe, as singing English and Italian songs at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, in the year 1703. Two years afterwards she made her début on the stage in the opera *Arsinoe, Queen of Cyprus*, composed, in imitation of the Italian style, by Thomas Clayton, a man who acquired great but unmerited celebrity. He was a member of King William's band, and, albeit of extremely limited capabilities, entertained a very exalted opinion of his own talents. Going to Italy, he there heard operas, and by dint of begging, borrowing, and stealing, possessed himself of a quantity of songs. With these he returned in triumph, and thoroughly convinced that nothing was easier than the composition of an opera, he produced the opera of *Arsinoe, Queen of Cyprus*, composed by Stanzani of Bologna. Travestying this, he strung together recitatives and melodies after a fashion of his own, until he had achieved a piece which afforded him infinite satisfaction. He was assisted by Signor Nicolo Haym and Mr. Charles Dieupart, both tolerable musicians and far superior to himself, but deficient in that impudence which was his leading characteristic. Haym translated Motteux's words, and Dieupart superintended the instrumentation.

His opera ready, Clayton's next care was to find a theatre and singers. Drury Lane was disengaged;

and Mrs. Tofts was engaged as prima donna, together with Mrs. Cross, Mrs. Lindsay, Mrs. Butler, Mrs. Turner, Ramondon, Hughes, Leveridge, and Cook, all good singers. A subscription list was opened for the pit and boxes, and *Arsinoe* was announced in the *Daily Courant* as "a new opera, after the Italian manner, all sung, being set by Master Clayton, with dances and singing before and after the opera by Signora F. Margarita de l'Epine."

A more captivating or talented prima donna could not have been found, even in Italy, than Katherine Tofts. Of the beauty of her "fine proportioned figure" Colley Cibber speaks with admiration. Her voice—a soprano—was clear and flexible; its natural qualities had been cultivated by study; and, in addition to an "exquisitely sweet, silver tone," she had a "peculiar, rapid swiftness of the throat;" perfections which, as Cibber justly remarks, are "not to be imitated by art or labour."

Signora Francesca Margarita de l'Epine, a native of Tuscany, was a woman of quite a different type to the fair Englishwoman. Very ugly, singularly tall, swarthy, rough, and brusque in manner, she must have had an unusually fine voice to have been enabled to retain her hold of public favour. Thirteen years previously, in 1691, she had come over with Giacomo Greber, a German, her teacher, and had made her first appearance at the concerts at York Buildings. She appeared

in the musical piece of the *Rival Queens* at Lincoln's Inn Fields, June 1st, 1692, when it was advertised as her last appearance in England; but she was so successful that "she continued," Burney remarks, "to sing more last and positively last times during the month," and never quitted England at all. She became a special favourite with her audiences, being a fine singer and a scientific performer on the harpsichord; but she did not escape invidious criticism in her private character. She was perfectly respectable, yet her friendship for her master drew on her the insulting appellation of "Greber's Peg." Her appearance, one would have imagined, had sufficed both to drive away lovers and to disarm scandal; yet she was surrounded by those who admired and those who ridiculed. She even contrived to enchant Daniel, Earl of Nottingham, who threw himself at her feet, and braved the laughter of the fashionable, political, and literary world. Rowe indited some verses on the subject, in imitation of an ode of Horace, "Ne sit ancillæ tibi amor pudori." They ran thus—

"Did not base Greber's Peg inflame
The sober Earl of Nottingham,
Of sober sire descended,
That, careless of his soul and fame,
To playhouses he nightly came,
And left church undefended?"

Lord Halifax, too, wrote a stinging epigram on the

subject of the "tawny Tuscan" and "tall Nottingham," which is given by Hawkins. However, the Earl was too much infatuated to be conscious of the arrows aimed at him; and Margarita, from whose gay temper sarcasms glanced like bullets from the hide of a rhinoceros, went on her way smilingly and unconcernedly. Her sister, Maria Margherita Gallia, a pupil of Nicolo Haym's, probably allured by the success of Margarita, arrived in London in 1703, when she made her début at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields as a singer; but she did not create any sensation, her star being completely extinguished in the blaze of Margarita's fame.

Margarita was not offered any part in Clayton's opera, being unable to pronounce English; but she agreed to sing Italian airs before and after it: indeed she was more fitted for the concert-room than the stage. There was not much love lost between her and Katherine Tofts. Mrs. Tofts used to sing at the "subscription music," like Margarita, singing Italian and English songs alternately. But there was no open rupture till the end of January, 1704, when Margarita appeared for the first time at Drury Lane, where Mrs. Tofts was singing. The "Italian lady," as she was called, sang first on the 29th, and was received with such delight as to annoy her Anglican rival; for, the next week, Mrs. Tofts' maid, being in the house, got up a disturbance while Mar-

garita was singing. Ill-natured people hinted that Mrs. Tofts had sent persons into the theatre to occasion the uproar, with the view of disconcerting her rival; an aspersion which, whether true or false, hurt the feelings of that lady to such an extent, that she caused the following paragraph to be inserted in the *Daily Courant* of February 8th: — "Ann Barwick having occasioned a disturbance at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane on Saturday night last, the 5th of February, and being taken into custody, Mrs. Tofts, in vindication of her innocency, sent a letter to Mr. Rich, master of the said theatre, which is as followeth:— 'Sir,—I was very much surprised when I was informed that Ann Barwick, who was lately my servant, had committed a rudeness last night at the playhouse, by throwing of oranges and hissing when Mrs. L'Epine, the Italian gentlewoman, sung. I hope no one will think it was with my privity, as I assure you it was not. I abhor such practices; and I hope you will cause her to be prosecuted, that she may be punished as she deserves.—I am, sir, your humble servant, KATHERINE TOFTS. Christopher Rich, Esq.'"

This musical rivalry, a novelty in England, gave rise to many "squibs," and afforded subject-matter for laughter and gossip in coffee-houses, drawing-rooms, and supper-saloons. Hughes, that "agreeable poet," who wrote the *Siege of Damascus*, and who alternately paid his devoirs to the Muses and to the

authorities in the Ordnance Office, wrote of the two songstresses in the following strain :—

"Music has learned the discords of the state,
And concerts jar with Whig and Tory hate.
Here Somerset and Devonshire attend
The British Tofts, and every note commend;
To native merit just, and pleased to see
We've Roman hearts, from Roman bondage free.
There famed L'Epine does equal skill employ,
While listening peers crowd to the ecstatic joy:
Bedford to hear her song his dice forsakes,
And Nottingham's enraptured when she shakes;
Lull'd statesmen melt away their drowsy cares
Of England's safety, in Italian airs."

But to return to *Arsinoe, Queen of Cyprus*. Clayton was perfectly well assured that he was about to work a complete reformation in English musical taste, and the highest expectations were indulged in by his excited patrons. Nicolo Haym played the principal violoncello, to which instrument several of the symphonies and leading accompaniments were assigned, and Charles Dieupart the first violin. It was on the 16th of January, 1705, that the piece was brought out; and a more vile performance, if the testimony of the most able musical critics may be trusted, could not have been presented to any audience. "The music, as well as the words, of this piece were utterly contemptible. It is a worthless production," ejaculated Dr. Burney. "The translation and music to which it was set are execrable," growls Hawkins. Notwith-

standing its defects, "such is the charm of novelty," chorus the two great authorities, "that this miserable performance, deserving neither the name of a drama by its poetry, nor of an opera by its music," ran twenty-four nights triumphantly. "The English," says Burney, "must have hungered and thirsted extremely after dramatic music at this time to be attracted and amused by such trash."

It was probably this unparalleled success which induced Greber to produce, the next year, a musical entertainment composed by himself, called the *Loves of Ergasto*, but which the public chose to entitle "Greber's Pastoral." Margarita, of course, sang in this work, which was selected to inaugurate the opening night of the theatre in the Haymarket, a superb edifice just completed by Sir John Vanbrugh and Congreve. Both the entertainment and the house were dead failures; for the "vanity of vast columns, gilded cornices, and immoderately high roof," having been allowed to militate against the first requirement of an operatic theatre—the power of conveying sound—the music, instead of reaching the ears of the audience, was carried off to the ceiling, whence it reverberated in indistinct echoes. The Pastoral, despite its ill success, was followed by another of the same kind, the *Temple of Love*, composed by Signor Saggioni, a Venetian, which pleased as little as its predecessor; and the result was that the theatre failed the very first

season. Betterton and his company, who had placed themselves without reserve under the banner of Vanbrugh and Congreve, then returned to Lincoln's Inn Fields, Sir John gave up the reins of his musical stud to Owen MacSwiney, a knowing Irishman, and the speculation might be fairly considered to have come to grief.

Margarita transferred her services readily to Owen MacSwiney — denominated by Dibdin "a shuttlecock,"—who, in partnership with Collier, was about to produce a second opera at Drury Lane, entitled *Camilla;* the music of which, arranged by Haym, was chiefly borrowed from Marc Antonio Bononcini, brother of the celebrated Giovanni Bononcini, and the words were by Silvio Stampiglia. The Opera having now begun to be an established fact in London, several Italian singers had come over "on speculation;" among others, Cavalier Valentini Urbani, and a lady called mysteriously "The Baroness." Valentini, a scholar of Pistocchi, though he had a pure and elegant style, was by no means a great singer, for his voice was feeble and his execution moderate; but he was a good actor, and popular in his manner. Of the Baroness but little is known; even her name is an enigma not to be solved. Burney, while declaring himself "by no means qualified to be her biographer," says that she was a German who had learned to sing in Italy, and had performed in the opera at several

German Courts under her unusual appellation, before her arrival in England. Some people said she was the widow of the ill-fated Stradella; but Hawkins shows that this was an improbability.

On the 4th of March, *Camilla* was produced. The absurdity of the manner in which it was performed provoked much laughter, for one half was sung in Italian, the other half in English. Valentini, Margarita, and the Baroness were unable to sing in any language but their own; while Katherine Tofts, Mrs. Lindsay, and the other English singers, even while professing to sing Italian songs, did not like to venture too far out of their native tongue. Mrs. Tofts' beauty and Margarita's singing, however, ensured for the piece a splendid success. Mrs. Tofts more especially, by her grace, her fine voice, and her acting, achieved her greatest triumph as "Camilla." There is a pleasant allusion to it in the *Spectator*, in the form of a letter from the actor who personated the wild boar slain by the Amazonian heroine, in which he apologizes for having acted with a certain amount of tameness. "As for the little resistance which I made," he says, "I hope it may be excused when it is considered that the dart was thrown at me by so fair a hand. I must confess I had but just put on my brutality; and Camilla's charms were such, that, beholding her erect mien, hearing her charming voice, and astonished with her graceful motion, I could not keep up to

my assumed fierceness, but died like a man." The success of the performance may be judged from the fact that in the course of four years it was represented sixty-four times.

Camilla was so great a success, having met with a reception in England that it had never experienced abroad, that Addison, who seems to have been no judge of musical ability, and who thought that Clayton was an admirable composer, was induced to write the libretto of an opera. Adopting the romantic story of Fair Rosamond as a groundwork for his plot, he raised thereon a poetical superstructure. The public, admiring Addison, anticipated much from this opera. It was cast thus:—

Queen Eleanor	Mrs. Tofts.
Page (usually called the boy) .	Mr. Holcombe.
Sir Trusty (keeper of the bower) .	Mr. Leveridge.
Grideline (his wife) . . .	Mrs. Lindsay.
Rosamond	Signora Maria Gallia.
King Henry	Mr. Hughes.
First Guardian Angel . . .	Mr. Lawrence.
Second Guardian Angel . .	Miss Reading.

But it was full of absurdities and anachronisms. As a poem it was graceful and lively; as a drama, flat, tame, and unsuited for the stage. "The verses of *Rosamond*," observes Dr. Burney, "are highly polished, and more lyrical perhaps than in any poem of the same kind in our language." The music was "below contempt." Hawkins dismisses it in a few

words: "A criticism on this most wretched performance," he remarks, "is more than it deserves, but to account for the bad reception it met with, it is necessary to mention that the music preponderating against the elegance and humour of the poetry and the reputation of its author, bore it down the third night of representation." As to the songs, "they have neither air nor expression." There is one line which runs thus—

"Oh, the pleasing, pleasing, pleasing, pleasing, pleasing anguish."

A critic of the period, who was present at the performance, says that the opera was "a confused chaos of music," and that "its only merit was its shortness."

The failure of his work gave Addison such a disgust for the opera, that ever after he did his best to ridicule and sneer it out of fashion, and never let an opportunity escape of flinging a jeer at the opera performances.

Rosamond was succeeded by *Thomyris, Queen of Scythia*, the music selected from the compositions of Alessandro Scarlatti and Bononcini; the recitatives and accompaniments were committed to the care of Mr., afterwards Dr., Pepusch, one of the greatest musical celebrities of the time. The libretto was written by Motteux, a man who, says Hawkins, kept an "India shop" in Leadenhall Street, which was

much frequented by the old Duchess of Marlborough and other ladies of Queen Anne's day. Mrs. Tofts and Margarita both appeared in this opera; the latter performed the part of the Queen. This opera was not so much admired as *Camilla*, but it was received with favour. Of the music Dr. Burney gives some account, and mentions that the songs of Margarita in particular contained "several difficult passages of execution." *Thomyris* was succeeded by a little piece called *Love's Triumph*, which was produced under the direction of Valentini, for his own benefit. It was written by Cardinal Ottoboni (the English words being adapted by Motteux), and set to music by Carlo Çesarini Giovanni —surnamed Del Violone—and Francesco Gasparini. Margarita filled the part of Olinda. French dancing, then a novelty, was introduced as an experiment. As a speculation the piece failed; so Valentini determined for the future to confine himself to singing, and never more play the ungrateful rôle of manager.

The last opera in which our rival Queens of Song appeared was *Pyrrhus and Demetrius*, the libretto of which had been written by Owen Mac Swiney; the music, by Adriano Morselli, was arranged by Nicolo Haym. Margarita and Mrs. Tofts were the leading ladies in the piece, which was brought out on the 14th of December, 1708; the Baroness, Valentini, and the usual troupe, sustaining the minor parts. The opera was a great success, and continued for a long time to

draw crowded houses, in spite of the absurdity of the motley language; although the prices were raised, it was performed thirty times in the course of the season.

The lovely Katherine Tofts never graced the stage afterwards. In the spring, a terrible misfortune snatched her from her admirers, in the meridian of her bloom and beauty. Her brain unexpectedly gave way, and her friends were compelled to place her under restraint. It was conjectured that the unparalleled success she had acquired in the part of Camilla had turned her head. Every one regretted the blow which took her from the operatic world. Steele, however, speaks in a very unfeeling manner on the subject, in the *Tatler*, No. 20, for Thursday, May 26th, 1709:—"This lady," he writes, "entered so thoroughly into the great characters she acted that when she had finished her part, she could not think of retrenching her equipage, but would appear in her own lodging with the same magnificence that she did upon the stage. This greatness of soul has reduced that unhappy princess to an involuntary retirement, where she now passes her time amid the woods and forests, thinking on the crowns and sceptres she has lost, often humming over in her solitude

'I was born of royal race,
Yet must wander in disgrace.'

"But for fear of being overheard, and her quality known, she usually sings it in Italian,

'Nacqui al regno, nacqui al trono,
E pur sono
Sventurata.'"

This verse was from one of her songs in *Camilla*, the first in the opera.

For some time Mrs. Tofts laboured under this disorder; but, at last, by the aid of judicious treatment, she was restored to the use of her reason. She did not return to the stage upon her recovery, having accumulated a large sum of money by her professional talents; and shortly after, she married Mr. Joseph Smith, a diplomatic gentleman, a connoisseur of great taste, a collector of rare books and prints, and a patron of art. Her husband being appointed British consul at Venice, she went with him thither, where he maintained great state and magnificence. But poor Katherine did not long retain the capability of enjoying her position, for her malady again returning, she was obliged to live sequestered from the world in a remote part of her house, and content herself with ranging its garden, walking to and fro in her fancied royalty. The exact time of her death is not known; but she was still living about the year 1735. Her husband, Mr. Smith, died about 1771, leaving a large collection of books, which was brought over to England, and sold by auction.

After the close of Mrs. Tofts' career, Margarita

retained the favour of the public, though several younger rivals appeared to contest it with her. Signora Elizabetta Pilotti Schiavonetti, who performed the part of Berenice in *Hydaspes*, Signora Francesca Vanini Boschi, Signora Rosa Piscina, and one or two others, attempted to snatch the laurel crown from her brow. She did not sing in *Rinaldo* when Handel arrived in 1710, nor did she sing much again in operatic performances. People were beginning to find that the hitherto inimitable Margarita was growing rococo; and the manager, now Mr. Aaron Hill, who directed both theatres, did not take the trouble to disguise the harsh fact from her. She had a favourite parrot, which, when at home, she would place at the open window of her lodging in Boswell Court, where it would keep constantly repeating the first line of Handel's *Julius Cæsar*, "Non è vago e bello." The manager, having occasion to write to her, addressed his letter to "Mdlle. de l'Epine, at the sign of the Italian Parrot." Enraged at this affront, she wrote back angrily, threatening to resign her engagement; to which the manager insolently replied, that, notwithstanding her merit, he could "very well spare her, if she would send her feathered pupil." She sang at the concerts in York Buildings and at Stationers' Hall, and once in the hall of the Middle Temple, in a musical performance at the Christmas Revels of that society. Swift mentions her

in his "Journal to Stella," in terms most discreditable to him :—

"*August* 6, 1711.—We have a music-meeting in our town (Windsor) to-night. I went to the rehearsal of it, and there was Margarita and her sister, and *another drab*, and a parcel of fiddlers. I was weary, and would not go to the meeting, which I am sorry for, because I heard it was a great assembly." In the same coarse manner the Dean frequently speaks of the "music-meetings" at Windsor in the course of this season; endeavouring to evince his contempt by such phrases as, "In half an hour I was tired of their *fine stuff*."

In 1712 Margarita appeared as Calypso, in *Calypso and Telemachus*, written by Mr. Hughes, and set by Mr. Galliard; an opera that, from want of interest in the story, and from being filled with a series of grave moral sentiments—which, as Dr. Burney remarks, "however edifying in a sermon or in the closet, are seldom recieved with due reverence in a place of amusement"—was represented but five times. She also performed in a revival of *Almahide*, with Valeriano —temporary successor to Nicolini — Valentini, La Pilotti, and Mrs. Barbier; in the pasticcio of *Dorinda*, and in *Theseus;* in all of which pieces she had elaborate and difficult airs to sing. In 1714 she performed with the new star, Anastasia Robinson,

in the opera of *Creso*, during its nine representations; and she appeared in *Ernelinda*, the part of Ricemero being taken by an Italian débutante, Signora Diana Vico, who afterwards subsided into a second-class singer.

Having acquired a fortune of some ten thousand pounds, Margarita retired in 1722. She married Dr. Pepusch about 1723 or 1724, when the money which she brought him enabled him to pursue with ease those scientific studies which he ardently loved; and also, Burney says, to "live in a style of elegance which, till his marriage, he had been a stranger to." Margarita's mother, a woman as remarkably short as Margarita was tall, resided with them. They were not a very sentimental couple, but lived together in harmony. He used to call her Hecate, in allusion to her ugliness; and she would answer to the title with as much alacrity as if it had been Helen. They had one child, a boy, in whose education the doctor laboured assiduously, in order to fit him for his own profession; but this child died in 1739, before reaching the age of thirteen. They took a house in Fetter Lane, in 1730; and in 1737, the doctor being chosen organist of the Charter House, they retired to that venerable foundation. Margarita's favourite occupation now was in trying to master the difficult pieces in Queen Elizabeth's Virginal Book, which she found in her husband's library, and to such perfection did she

arrive in playing them, that "great was the resort of persons to hear her."

Margarita died in 1740, the year after the death of her boy, leaving the worthy doctor to mourn her loss for twelve years.

CHAPTER II.

ANASTASIA ROBINSON (COUNTESS OF PETERBOROUGH).

ONE of the numerous class of moderately talented persons who, during the reign of the "merry monarch," made a respectable living by portrait-painting, was a gentleman named Robinson. Being of good family, agreeable in his manners, and having a tolerable reputation, he was popular, and therefore was enabled to live in very good style. During his student days, he had travelled to Rome, and while acquiring a mastery of the Italian language and his legitimate art, attained an unusual degree of skill as a musical amateur. On his return to England, he married a woman of some fortune, by whom he had two daughters, Anastasia and Margaret. These girls were still infants when their mother died; and deeming it necessary to give them some maternal guidance, Mr. Robinson married a young Roman Catholic lady of the name of Lane, by whom he had a son and a third daughter.

Anxious to render his daughters capable of occupying

distinguished places in society, Mr. Robinson gave them as finished an education as his means could command. Observing that Anastasia had an ear for melody, and a voice which promised much, he placed her under the care of the eminent Dr. Crofts; and fancying that Peggy inclined to painting, he resolved to make her a miniature painter, rather as an accomplishment than a profession. He also imparted to them the knowledge which he had gained of Italian, so that Anastasia was able to read with facility the best Italian poets, and to converse in that tongue with ease.

An unexpected affliction suddenly blighted all the hopes and prospects of the amiable portrait-painter. He was seized with a disorder in his eyes, which terminated in the total loss of sight. A serious debate was held as to what should be done in this shipwreck of the family; and as his wife had some little property, it was decided to devote a part of it to perfecting Anastasia's musical talents, with the view of fitting her for a public singer. Anastasia, who was a good girl, diligently applied herself to the study of music; and in order that her taste in singing might approach nearer to that of the Italian vocalists, she received lessons from Pietro Giuseppe Sandoni, at that time a fashionable singing-master residing in London, and likewise from the "Baroness." Her general education had been superintended with scrupulous

care, and she was full of excellent qualities, being naturally of an amiable disposition, prudent and virtuous, gentle and unassuming, cheerful and sensible.

Peggy was not so easily managed. She did not like painting, while she was passionately devoted to its sister-art, music; and slighting the studies which she was enjoined to pursue, she declared she would not learn anything except music. But it is not always desirable to have two singers in a family; for it is sometimes difficult enough to find engagements for one. Peggy, however, would have her way, and Mr. Robinson, yielding reluctantly to her wishes, placed her under the care of Bononcini, and afterwards sent her to Paris; where, under the tuition of Rameau, she attained a high degree of proficiency. Two very serious impediments existed to her hope of succeeding as a public singer: she was exceedingly small, and unusually shy. Ultimately she married a military officer, Colonel Bowles, and her history abruptly closes with her wedding.

Anastasia, with natural talents much inferior to her sister, had courage and perseverance, and, though modest, was not a victim to *mauvaise honte*. She continued to study; and when pronounced sufficiently finished to make her début, appeared at the concerts at York Buildings, where, in addition to singing, she accompanied herself on the harpsichord. Her success was as great as the most sanguine might have hoped

for. Mild and pleasing in her manners, interesting-looking, though by no means what might be termed "a beauty," she became at once a favourite. Of middle stature, a countenance with great sweetness of expression and large blue eyes, an unaffected and graceful air, her "appearance bespoke for her that favour which she afterwards proved she merited by her musical skill." Her voice was a fine soprano at first, but it deepened gradually into a contralto, and was of extensive compass; but she wanted Peggy's exquisitely delicate ear and discriminating taste to render her a perfect singer.

Her success led to her immediately obtaining engagements to sing at various places. Finding that she became such a pet with the musical public, and encouraged by the patronage of some ladies of high rank, her father took a house in Golden Square, where he established weekly concerts and assemblies in the manner of conversaziones. These réunions were frequented by a numerous coterie of persons of refined taste and musical predilections, and it speedily grew to be the fashion to visit Mr. Robinson's rooms. Anastasia's modest, unassuming manner and equable temper obtained for her not only public favour, but the love and admiration of many persons of high birth. The Duchess of Portland honoured her with a lasting friendship, and spoke subsequently of her as having been "perfectly well-bred and admirably accomplished."

Urged by her friends, Anastasia consented to accept an engagement to appear at the Opera House in 1714. The Opera was, though apparently in a flourishing condition, in reality going to ruin, and for some time it had been closed, the expenses having been found greatly to exceed the profits. The leaders of the fashionable world, however, had exerted themselves to re-establish it, and a sum of 30,000*l.* being subscribed, of which amount the King contributed 1,000*l.*, a committee, consisting of the first noblemen in the kingdom, was appointed, under the name of the Royal Academy of Music. In order to resuscitate the opera in England, they engaged the three most eminent musicians then known, Bononcini, Ariosto Attilio, and GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL. The last offered to go in quest of a company, and at Dresden he engaged Senesino, Berenstadt, Boschi, and Margherita Durastanti. Senesino (his real name was Francesco Bernardo), a fine singer, with a clear, powerful, equal, and fluent voice, and perfect intonation, was the leading vocalist of the day. In style he so nearly resembled Nicolini that Cibber avers a blind man could not have known the difference. In aspect and deportment he is described as having been like one of the heroes of old, and his carriage was noble and majestic. Berenstadt's distinguishing peculiarity consisted in being "huge and unwieldy." Boschi, the basso, was chiefly remarkable for a voice of immense volume, and a vigorous

style of acting, which elicited the sarcastic line, in "Harlequin Horace, or, the Art of Modern Poetry,"

"And, Boschi-like, be always in a rage."

The writer of that brochure says, in a note, that Boschi was a "useful performer, for several years, in the Italian Opera; for if any of the audience chanced unhappily to be lulled to sleep by these soothing entertainments, he never failed of rousing them up again, and by the fury both of his voice and action made it manifest that, though only a tailor by profession, he was nine times more a man than any of his fellow-warblers." His wife, Francesca Vanini Boschi, was engaged at the same time. She was then considerably past her prime, but possessed of good abilities.

Margherita Durastanti, a large, coarse, masculine-looking woman, was a soprano, distinguished not only by her musical talent, but by the high respectability of her character. These qualities obtained for her favour in the highest quarters, of which we find afterwards a very convincing proof in the *Evening Post* of the 7th March, 1721, where we are informed that "last Thursday his Majesty was pleased to stand godfather, and the Princess and Lady Bruce godmothers, to a daughter of Mrs. Durastanti, chief singer in the Opera House. The Marquis Visconti for the King, and Lady Lichfield for the Princess." She made her first appearance in the opera of *Radamisto*, with Senesino;

and then appeared in *Agrippina*, a piece which excited such extravagant admiration that the most disgraceful scenes occurred through people trying to force their way into the house. "In so splendid and fashionable an assembly of ladies," observes the anonymous author of a *Life of Handel*, "to the excellence of their taste we must impute it, if there was no shadow of form or ceremony; scarcely, indeed, any appearance of order or regularity, politeness or decency. Many who had forced their way into the house with an impetuosity but ill suited to their rank or sex, actually fainted through the excessive heat and closeness of it; several gentlemen were turned back who had offered forty shillings for a seat in the gallery, after having despaired of getting any in the pit or boxes."

As a coadjutor of Margherita Durastanti, but not as a rival,—both being mild and amiable women—Mistress Robinson made her appearance in the Opera House. Scarlatti's opera of *Narcissus* was selected for her début, when she achieved such a success as Echo, that an engagement was ratified, with a salary of 1,000*l.*, and such emoluments as might arise from benefits and presents. From this time she appeared in almost every opera that was newly brought forward:—*Mutius Scævola*, *Crispus*, *Griselda*, *Otho*, *Floridante*, *Flavius*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Pharnaces*, *Coriolanus*, *Vespasian*, and also in revivals. On the 23rd May, 1714, was produced Handel's opera of *Amadigi*, or *Amadis of*

Gaul; in it there were but four characters, which were filled by Nicolini, Diana Vico, Elizabetta Pilotti Schiavonetti, and Anastasia Robinson. The music given to Nicolini drew out all his powers, both as a singer and actor, and "Mrs. Anastasia Robinson," says Burney, "never had so good a part assigned to her."

In the meantime, her amiability, talent, and agreeable appearance, gained for the young vocalist tender regards. Among the gentlemen who frequented the house in Golden Square, was a certain General H——, a man of elegant manners, wealthy, and insinuating, who managed to impress the fair singer with the idea that he was honourably paying his addresses to her, with the view of making her his wife. Liking him, and having the sanction of her father and stepmother, Anastasia did not repulse his advances, never dreaming for an instant that his intentions were anything but those which he professed. What was her amazement and indignation when, one day, he made a declaration so insulting that no alternative was left her but to dismiss him with ignominy from her presence, and try to drive him from her thoughts—"though," said the venerable Mrs. Delany, years afterwards, "she was very much prepossessed in his favour."

Another individual who more than ordinarily admired her was the Earl of Peterborough, an eccentric

nobleman, eminent alike for his military adventures and his love of art. He paid the most devoted attention to her, and at length offered to marry her, on condition of her keeping the union a profound secret: his pride revolting at the idea of its becoming known that he had made an opera-singer his countess. To this she agreed, and they were married. She remained on the stage for some time; but at last two things hastened her retirement: the arrival of a brilliant star, the celebrated Cuzzoni, reducing her to second and third rate parts, and a gross insult which she received from Senesino one night, during the public rehearsal of an opera, in 1724. The earl, while obstinately refusing to acknowledge her legal claim on his protection, instantly stepped forward as her champion, dragged the offender behind the scenes, and there summarily gave him such a caning, that the unhappy delinquent fell on his knees and howled for mercy.

Lady M. W. Montagu, in a letter to the Countess of Mar, thus notices the affair: in a most unwomanly spirit, it must be confessed. After mentioning some other choice *morceau* of scandal, she goes on to say: "The second heroine (Mrs. Robinson) has engaged half the town in arms, from the nicety of her virtue, which was not able to bear too near approach of Senesino in the opera, and her condescension in her acceptance of Lord Peterborough for a champion, who

has signalized both his love and courage upon this occasion in as many instances as ever Don Quixote did for Dulcinea. Poor Senesino, like a vanquished giant, was forced to confess upon his knees that Anastasia was a nonpareil of virtue and beauty. Lord Stanhope (the celebrated Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield), as dwarf to the said giant, joked on his side, and was challenged for his pains;" though the hostile meeting resulted very harmlessly.

Anastasia quitted the stage on the 13th June, at the close of the season. She publicly accepted a hundred pounds a month from her husband, and was to be seen constantly driving about in his berlin; his lordship thus allowing her to rest under a stigma which could have been removed by two words from his lips.

The eclipse of the English singer irritated certain critics, who disliked foreign songstresses. Carey, in reference to Cuzzoni, says indignantly—

> "With better voice and fifty times her skill,
> Poor Robinson is always treated ill;
> But such is the good nature of the town,
> 'Tis now the mode to cry the English down."

On the 30th October, 1733, Handel opened the Haymarket Theatre, with an entirely new Italian company, consisting of Scalzi, the two sisters Negri, Carestini, and Signora Durastanti; the last of whom reappeared after an absence of ten years. The signora

was very kindly received; but after this season we learn no more of her.

Upon the death of Anastasia Robinson's father, Lord Peterborough took a house near Fulham, in the neighbourhood of his own villa at Parson's Green, where he settled Anastasia and her stepmother. Soon after, they removed to his villa; but his "haughty spirit" still ruling paramount, he was resolved never to acknowledge a marriage which he considered to the last degree derogatory to his dignity. Anastasia's half-brother, Mr. Lane, came to reside in the family in the character of a Roman Catholic priest; Anastasia belonging to the Church of Rome. Although Anastasia retained her maiden name, so convinced were her numerous friends of her good principles that many ladies frequented her house, persuaded that she was the legal mistress of the mansion over which she presided. She was in the habit of holding a kind of musical academy, in which Bononcini, Martini, Tosi, Greene, and other musical celebrities of the day, used to assist. The earl, too, would give frequent dinner-parties, when he afforded his friends the opportunity of hearing some of the finest music, and would entertain them with exciting accounts of his adventures during his residence abroad, particularly while he commanded in Spain. In that country, being often, during a journey, in danger of perishing for want of food, and, when he could get it, being frequently

obliged to dress it himself, he had become a first-rate cook; and "such was the force of habit," says Hawkins, "that, till disabled by age, his dinner was constantly of his own dressing. Those who have dined with him at Parson's Green say that he had a dress for the purpose, like that of a tavern cook, and that he used to retire from his company an hour before dinner-time, and having despatched his culinary affairs, would return properly dressed, and take his place among them," to delight them by his varied powers of conversation and the display of his finished taste in art.

It must have been somewhat of a trial even to one of Anastasia's amiable, quiet disposition to be obliged to endure the life she led; for, independently of the consciousness of the miserable position she was placed in, Lord Peterborough was a most uncongenial companion for her. Eccentric, and arrogant, his vagaries kept her in a constant flutter; and it was only by the exercise of excellent sense and fortitude of mind that she was supported through "many severe trials in her conjugal state." At length an incident occurred which partially shook the wall of pride with which her lordly husband surrounded himself. Unexpectedly, in 1735, he was seized with a terrible fit of illness while away from her; then, missing the tender care of his wife, he besought her to come and nurse him at Mount Bevis, near Southampton. Moved by his urgent en-

treaties, she agreed, on one condition: that of being allowed to wear her wedding-ring, though denied the privilege of taking his name. At first he would not comply with this reasonable request, until finding her inexorable, he consented; so she went. But the health of the earl gradually grew worse; and in attending upon him the gentle Anastasia nearly lost her life. At last the physicians advised change of climate for him, and he asked her to accompany him to Lisbon. This she positively refused to do, unless he declared their marriage.

Finding that all his pleadings were useless, and that Anastasia's resolution was final, the earl, rather than be deprived of her society, gave way. Without informing her of his intentions, he made an appointment for her and all his relations and friends to meet him at "the apartment over the gateway of St. James's Palace," belonging to Mr. Pointz; who was married to his lordship's niece, and who was at that time preceptor to Prince William, afterwards Duke of Cumberland. When they were all assembled, to their astonishment he broke forth into an eloquent oration, enumerating all the virtues and perfections of Mrs. Anastasia Robinson, and the rectitude of her conduct during his long acquaintance with her; he acknowledged his great obligations and sincere attachment to her, declaring that he was determined to do her that justice now which he ought to have done long ago:

this was to present her to all his family as his wife. He spoke with such energy, and with so much feeling, that Anastasia, being altogether unprepared for such a scene, "fainted away in the midst of the company," overcome by emotion.

Lord Peterborough did not live to reach Lisbon, for he died on the voyage. After his death Anastasia, returning to England, lived retired, chiefly at Mount Bevis; being seldom prevailed on to leave her self-constituted hermitage save by the Duchess of Portland, her early friend, who was always glad to have her at Bulstrode, and when unable to coax her to come, would visit her at her house. The countess found some papers belonging to the earl, after his death, which she burnt; having too much regard for his memory to give them to the world. Their contents may be judged of from the fact that in them he declared he had committed "three capital crimes" before he was *twenty!* By this act she offended many persons, "curious enquirers for anecdotes of so remarkable a character as that of the Earl of Peterborough," who would have been rejoiced to seize on such *morceaux* as would have been revealed in his confessions.

Anastasia survived her lord fifteen years, dying in 1750, respected and regretted, and leaving a character for integrity and goodness seldom enjoyed by even the highest celebrities.

CHAPTER III.

LAVINIA FENTON (DUCHESS OF BOLTON).

Among the fashionable coffee-houses frequented by the beaux, wits, and pretty fellows of Queen Anne's days, was one at Charing Cross, kept by an honest man of the name of Fenton. He had, about 1710 or 1711, married a sprightly dame who resided in the then not ungenteel neighbourhood of Drury Lane, and who—as she failed not to impress on those with whom she was acquainted—was the widow of a certain gay naval officer, Lieutenant Beswick.

Mrs. Fenton had a little girl, Lavinia, born in 1708, on whom she bestowed the surname of Fenton when she married the coffee-house keeper. Lavinia was an unusually lively and pretty child, and displayed a taste for singing so early that she could warble before she could speak. As she grew into childhood, she was the pet and plaything of the frequenters of her step-father's establishment, who used to take a special pleasure in teaching her the fashionable airs just as they themselves had learnt them. When she was

about seven or eight years of age, her wit began to rival her vocal talent and her beauty, and many a laugh was elicited by her sallies. It was about this time that "a comedian belonging to the Old House," who was in the habit of going to Fenton's, took a fancy to her; seating her on his knee, he would make her sing the catches and airs which she acquired from the "humming beaux," and he took particular pains to teach her various songs, more especially English ballads.

The little girl daily improved, till at last her mother thought it would be advisable to send her to a boarding-school, to finish her education; she was therefore packed off to a school for young ladies, where she remained till she was about thirteen. When she returned home, her voice and taste had so much developed by this time that her mother and stepfather engaged some of the best masters in the English ballad style to instruct her. She displayed a decided talent for acting, and an invincible inclination for the stage; in consequence of which, she succeeded in obtaining an engagement at the Haymarket in 1726, when she was eighteen, making her début as Monimia, in the *Orphan*. Her performance was so excellent that she was immediately regarded as a very promising young actress. She was possessed of a fine, melodious voice, a figure which, if not precisely beautiful, was well-formed and elegant, and a lively manner.

Though as yet but obscure, her beauty attracted numerous young gentlemen and noblemen, and one youthful lord was so fascinated by her charms that he magnanimously offered to relinquish for her sake the pleasures of the town, and retire with her to the solitude of his villa at Richmond, in Yorkshire, on any terms which she might propose short of marriage. This insulting offer was promptly declined, and the circumstance becoming public, added to her reputation.

Shortly after, she appeared in the character of Cherry, in the *Beaux Stratagem*, which she looked so admirably, and played with such archness and *abandon*, that she attracted the notice of Rich, the stingy manager of the rival theatre, who lured her from the Haymarket by the liberal salary of fifteen shillings a week.

About this time, Swift one day gossiping with Gay, who was then smarting under the insult of being offered the place of gentleman usher to the youthful Princess Louisa, and looking about for something to do instead of hunting for Court favours, his hopes of advancement by Court patronage being gone, the dean remarked to him, "What an odd, pretty sort of thing a Newgate Pastoral might make." The idea appeared to Gay worthy of reflection, but after consideration he thought it would be better to write a comedy on the same plan. This improvement on the original

suggestion he mentioned to Swift, who "did not much like the project." Gay carried it out, however, and, as he worked, he showed it to Swift and Pope; who, while strongly counselling him not to persevere, occasionally gave him a word of advice. Having, like Goldsmith, a taste for music, and playing with tolerable skill on the flute, Gay was enabled to adapt some of the airs in his piece to music, and when it was finished, he showed it once more to Pope and Swift, under the title of THE BEGGAR'S OPERA. Both critics united in deciding that "it would not succeed;" but, nothing discouraged, he offered it to Congreve, the lessee of Drury Lane, who, on reading it over, declined to risk bringing it out, pronouncing an opinion that "it would either take greatly or be d——d confoundedly."

Gay, whose confidence in the ultimate success of his piece was not to be damped, at once took *The Beggar's Opera* to Congreve's rival, Rich, who unhesitatingly accepted it, and put it in rehearsal without delay. The part of Polly Peachum, the heroine, was given to Lavinia Fenton, and Lucy Lockit was assigned to Mrs. Egleton, the wife of a young actor commonly called "Baron Egleton." Peachum was to be performed by Hyppesley, "a comedian of lively humour and droll pleasantry;" Lockit, by John Hall, who had been originally a dancing-master; and Mat of the Mint, by Mr. Spiller. The part of Macheath

was given to the great Mr. Quin, who began to study it with scarcely disguised ill-humour and dissatisfaction; for, although he could sing well enough to get through a convivial song in company—at that time almost an indispensable qualification required from every actor—yet he was quite conscious that his vocal abilities were far from reaching the standard which he felt requisite. It happened that among the performers at the theatre was a young comedian, named Tom Walker, considered to be "rather rising" in the mediocre parts of his line, who had a fine voice, a showy figure, and a gay, swaggering manner, well suited to the dashing, rollicking character of Macheath. Quin, who had drudged through two rehearsals, bethought him that this was precisely the individual who could perform the *rôle* which he found so distasteful; and on the occasion of the second rehearsal, as Walker strolled about behind the scenes humming snatches of the music of the opera in a clear ringing voice, Quin turned to Gay, and said, "There's a man who is much more qualified to do you justice than I am." Walker was called on to make the experiment; and Gay, "who instantly saw the difference," accepted him as the hero of his piece.

Dr. Pepusch, then in the zenith of his fame, had been very judiciously selected by Gay to superintend the arrangement and adaptation of the airs, and he composed an original overture upon the motivo of

one of the tunes: "I'm like a skiff." His accompaniments were masterly; but, long before the opera was laid aside, they were superseded by others more in accordance with modern taste.

Before the curtain rose, there occurred a somewhat awkward *contretemps*, which augured ill for the success of the opera. It was at that time customary for a short piece of music to be played before the overture, but the leader thought it better to omit it, as being more in accordance with the Italian method. The audience did not appreciate this, and expressed discontent, which at length swelled to clamour. Jack Hall, the celebrated comedian (who was to play Lockit), being deputed to apologize for the omission, by informing the spectators that, at the Opera, it was a rule to have no music prior to the overture, Jack good-humouredly assented, and stepped up to the foot-lights. A dead silence ensued, and the valiant Jack was so confounded at the abrupt transition from uproar to so strange a stillness, that he stammered, looked bewildered, and finally blundered out: "Ladies and gentlemen, we—we—beg you'll not call out for first and second music, because—because, you know, there is *never any music at all* in an *opera!*" An explosion of laughter saluted this brilliant speech, and Jack, confused and ashamed, made an awkward bow and retreated abruptly, leaving it to a more self-possessed actor to explain his meaning. The audience

thus appeased, the overture was played, and the curtain rose.

There were numbers of the author's friends in the house, and many men of fashion and note; among others, gaunt Sir Thomas Robinson, and the famous horse-racer, Sir Robert Fagge. The Duke and Duchess of Queensberry were also present. The duchess was sanguine; the duke did not know what to say: "This is a very odd thing, Gay," he remarked to the poet; "it is either a very good thing, or a very bad thing."

The piece was full of hits and sarcasms directed against the men in power, who had, Gay thought, used him badly. One or two of the songs were written by other persons; the first, "The modes of the Court," being written, according to the Dowager Lady Townsend, by Lord Chesterfield; "Virgins are like the fair flower," by Sir Charles Williams; "When you censure the age," by Swift; and "Gamesters and lawyers are jugglers alike," was suspected to be written by Mr. Fortescue, then Master of the Rolls. The political "hits" were thoroughly appreciated and enjoyed. Lockit's song, "When you censure the age," was instantly felt to apply to Sir Robert Walpole, and was loudly encored. Sir Robert, with ready wit, parried the thrust, at the repetition of the song, by calling out, in a sonorous voice, "Encore!" which produced a general cheer.

Success, however, still wavered, and Gay's friends

were watching the course of affairs very anxiously, when the Duke of Argyle, who sat in the box adjoining that occupied by Pope and Swift, was heard to say, "It will do—it must do—I see it in their eyes." This was encouraging, for the taste of his grace was undoubted, and he had a happy faculty of discovering which way the inclination of the public lay. At length Polly appeared. She was dressed, not as Polly Peachum has been attired in more modern times, but with an almost Quakerish simplicity. Her innocent looks and her charming air electrified the audience, and when she came to the two lines,—

> "For on the rope that hangs my dear
> Depends poor Polly's life,—"

she sang with such pathetic effect that plaudits broke simultaneously from all quarters of the house. This, everybody admitted, saved the piece. The delight of the audience increased as the opera proceeded; and the curtain fell amid reiterated expressions of approval.

After this, the *Beggar's Opera* attained a popularity unrivalled. Nothing else would be tolerated; and even on one benefit night, when a performer was suddenly taken ill and they were obliged to give out another play, the audience would not hear of any other piece being substituted but the *Beggar's Opera*, though it was then in the thirty-sixth night of its run; and the performers were obliged to comply.

"It made its progress into Wales, Scotland, and Ireland; ladies carried the principal songs on fans, and houses were furnished with it in screens; furthermore, it drove out of England (for that season) the Italian Opera, which had carried all before it for ten years." The performers grew rather tired of the piece, and on the seventy-second night of representation, Walker happening to be a little imperfect in his part, Rich called out to him, on his return from the stage, "Halloa, mister, I think your memory ought to be pretty good by this time!" "And so it is," retorted Walker, "but, zounds, sir, my memory is not to last for ever."

It was even performed, as a fashionable folly, by children, at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields; and "that the childish exhibition might be supported in all its branches," says Malcolm, "the manager contrived to send a book of the songs across the stage by a flying Cupid to Duke Frederick Prince of Wales." Swift exerted his powerful pen to make the opera as popular in Dublin as it was in London; and in a booth erected in George's Lane it was performed by children, when little Peggy Woffington made her first appearance on any stage. It was played at private theatricals in fashionable drawing-rooms. "If you are getting up the *Beggar's Opera*," Mrs. Delany writes to her sister, "pray let me play Mrs. Slammerkin," a character admirably suited to any one who might desire

to shine by dress and fine-lady aping. As for the author, his profits were said to have been not less than 2,000*l.*, while he received 4,000*l.* for copyright alone. In fact, it was a saying, remembered to this day, that the unparalleled success of the piece "made Gay rich, and Rich gay."

Lavinia Fenton, the heroine of the opera, found herself suddenly the object of a furore of admiration. Her portrait appeared in every print-shop window; poems, verses, and pieces of elaborate doggerel were addressed to her; improbable sketches of her career, private and theatrical, were published; collections were made of imaginary *bons mots* and witticisms which she had never uttered, but which were given to the world in her name; she became a reigning toast in town and was more than ever persecuted by the flatteries of men of fashion, insomuch that every night, after the performance was over, she was guarded home by a number of her particular friends, lest she should be forcibly carried off by some of her admirers. Her salary was immediately raised by Rich to the fabulous sum of 30*s.* a week; out of which she spared, it was said, an allowance for the maintenance of her father, who, it is to be presumed, was now in indifferent circumstances.

Six months after the production of the opera—in the July following—she quitted the stage; for Charles, the third Duke of Bolton, among other men of high

rank, addressed her with passionate admiration: his heart being captivated, as he afterwards declared, by the plaintive and bewitching manner in which she sang "O ponder well." He was already married, but the young prima donna consented to go and reside with him; having a presentiment that the coronet of a duchess would one day encircle her brow. Swift, in one of his letters, says, "The Duke of Bolton has run away with Polly Peachum, having settled 400*l.* a year on her during pleasure, and upon disagreement, 200*l.* more."

Her successor in the part of Polly was a Miss Warren, who had similar fortune in attracting the admiration of a wealthy gentleman, by whom she was taken from the stage. The ultimate fate of Tom Walker is worthy of a passing word. His astonishing success was destructive to him, for his society became so much sought by dissipated young men of fashion, that he fell into inveterate bad habits; he was scarcely ever sober, and was constantly under the necessity of eating sandwiches—or, as they were then called, anchovy toasts—behind the scenes, to allay the fumes of the wine or spirits he had imbibed. In consequence of his intemperate course, he at length died, in great distress, in 1774, at the age of forty-six, a victim to vicious courses.

Lavinia Fenton did not cast any discredit on her elevated position—for such she regarded a shameful

life with a duke. She was easy, graceful, and able to converse with fluency, and to do the honours of the duke's table. Dr. Joseph Warton, in a note subjoined to one of Swift's letters to Gay, gives a very favourable sketch of her demeanour. "She was," he says, "a very accomplished and most agreeable companion, had much wit, good strong sense, and a just taste in polite literature. I have had the pleasure of being at table with her, when her conversation was much admired by the first characters of the day, particularly by old Lord Bathurst and Lord Granville."

For twenty-three years she remained with the duke, several children being born to her during that period. A story is related, which tells how she once quarrelled with his grace, and they were about to separate, much to the chagrin of the lovely and ambitious fair one, when a happy thought struck her. Hastening to her dressing-room, she arrayed herself in the costume of his favourite Polly Peachum, and, returning, presented herself before him in all the grace and simplicity of the character, extended her arms, and sang pathetically, "O what pain it is to part!" Melted to the heart by her beauty, her tender attitude, and his reminiscences of the impression she had once made on him, the duke opened his arms, and, pressing her to his breast, became reconciled to the fascinating and ingenious songstress.

At the close of the twenty-three years, Lavinia Fenton was married to the Duke of Bolton. She did not long enjoy her station, however, for she died nine years after; when she was buried at Greenwich, with all appropriate honours.

CHAPTER IV.

EARLY FRENCH SINGERS.—MARTHE LE ROCHOIS—LA MAUPIN.

THE French Opera, like that of every other country, was derived from Italy. The first Italian company of performers appeared at Paris in 1577, and attracted such crowds that (it was said) the churches were deserted for the theatre. Another Italian company was brought to Paris by Cardinal Mazarin, in 1645, during the minority of Louis XIV., but at that time opera was little encouraged. Pieces called ballets, composed chiefly of dancing, but with dramatic action and music, were the favourite amusement of the Court; and it was not till the appearance of Quinault as poet, and of Lulli as musician, that the French opera stage came into existence. Their joint labours gained unbounded popularity; and the poetry of the one and the music of the other are found worthy of admiration even at the present day.

Lulli added to his musical genius great administrative talent in the management of the Opera. His

discipline is described as tyrannical but most efficient. He not only discovered performers of promising ability, but taught them almost everything belonging to their art. Among these young aspirants to distinction was Marthe le Rochois, who owed everything to this great master.

Marthe le Rochois was born in Caen, about 1658, of a family little favoured by the smiles of fortune. Left an orphan when only a year old, she had been adopted by an uncle, who, dying, left her with nothing to depend on besides the excellent education which he had given her and the fine voice with which nature had endowed her. The young provincial was not beautiful, she was not even pretty, but she was exceedingly clever. Her figure was mediocre, not to say vulgar; her face had nothing to redeem it from positive plainness, save a pair of black eyes, full of brilliance and expression, which seemed to reflect every passion and sentiment rising in her mind. She entered the Academy in 1677, and her progress in singing and in declamation was astonishing.

Lulli was struck with the talent of the young student; he was interested by her gifts and intelligence. He could readily sympathize with and assist genius which rose from a humble rank, for he himself had made his position entirely by his own efforts. The Chevalier de Guise had brought him from Italy as a page for Mademoiselle de Montpensier, but his short,

thick figure and ugly face disgusted the lady, and she sent him down to her kitchen as under scullion. The Comte de Nogent, one of the gentlemen of the Court, noticed the clever lad, who was always scraping at an old fiddle when he was not scraping dishes, and Jean Baptiste's fortune was made.

The sagacity of Lulli was not at fault with regard to Mdlle. le Rochois. He made her the most tempting offers at a period when, according to Madame de Maintenon, it did not cost more than eleven thousand livres to have a handsome house, with a coach and ten servants. Marthe joyfully accepted his terms, and appeared in 1680 in the character of Arethuse, in *Proserpine*, a lyric tragedy in five acts. Her success was brilliant. On the stage, so far from being a vulgar-looking brunette, she seemed a queen, a goddess, and all eyes were fixed upon her. Her spirit, her acting, her voice were marvellous; every action and gesture revealed talent of the highest order: even her silence was expressive. *Proserpine* was splendidly mounted in the style of the period, according to which, "Pluto, to make the more tempting figure," says Mr. Spectator, "puts himself in a French equipage, and brings Ascalaphus along with him as his *valet de chambre*."

In 1682 Lulli produced *Persée;* in 1683, *Phaeton;* in 1684, *Amadis;* and in 1685, *Roland.* His music was rapturously applauded. Poor Quinault, modest and retiring, was not thought of, and invariably withdrew

into the background, while Lulli stepped forward and carried off all the praise; yet everybody was jealous of Quinault. "Where shall you put me?" growled Boileau one night at the Opera. "Put me in some place where I shall not be able to hear the words." The *beaux esprits* tried to force Lulli to give up Quinault; and one night, after supper, a whole party, Despréaux at their head, rushed on Lulli, armed with champagne-glasses, and cried, "Renounce Quinault, or you are a dead man!" This pleasantry only made Lulli laugh, so they began to speak seriously, raking together every possible circumstance that could disgust him with the poetry of Quinault. Perrault, the enemy of Boileau, and the inventor of French fairy-tales, was almost the only one who dared to support Quinault. "He boasted of the glory of being his friend," says an old French writer; "he took in hand his defence, and soon all the projects for a powerful cabal were disconcerted."

Mdlle. le Rochois, far from being intoxicated with her success, retained all her simplicity, frankness, and sweetness of disposition. Petty jealousy never troubled her open nature; and she freely gave her advice to all who asked it. Lulli's admiration and confidence in her genius increased every day: he consulted her on all his works, and her advice, it is said, contributed much to the triumphant success which always attended them.

Armide, Lulli's best opera, was produced in 1686.

This was the last of Quinault's works; and it is said that Lulli insisted on his re-writing the last act five times, which so disgusted the poet that he withdrew from dramatic composition. Others ascribe his retirement to feelings of devotion.

Mdlle. le Rochois surpassed herself in this opera, and achieved triumphant success in the character, which afforded her ample scope for impassioned acting in striking situations. She appeared, in the first act, between two confidantes remarkable for the beauty of their forms and loveliness of their faces, Mdlle. Moreau and Mdlle. Desmâtins; but for the moment people saw only Mdlle. le Rochois, when, opening her arms and raising her head majestically, she uttered the verses—

> "Je ne triomphe pas du plus vaillant de tous,
> L'indomptable Renaud échappe à mon courroux—"

yet those very arms which she raised were so deformed that they had to invent sleeves *à la persanne* to hide them. In the last scene in the second act, when Armide advances, dagger in hand, ready to stab the sleeping Renaud, fury, love, compassion, and tenderness, by turns were displayed in her gestures and depicted in her countenance. During this soliloquy, when she is prevented from striking Renaud by the influence of a passion of which she is as yet unconscious, her action was exquisitely beautiful.

At first *Armide* was not popular; this caused extreme

mortification to Lulli, who was such a passionate admirer of his own compositions that he declared he would have killed any one who said they were bad. He had the opera performed for his sole gratification, he alone constituting the audience. The King, being told of this odd whim, thought the opera must be good, since Lulli himself was so pleased; and he ordered it to be performed before him, and was charmed with it. Of course the Court and the public immediately changed their opinion of the opera, and it was well received after this. The libretto was afterwards reset by Rameau, and, more recently, by Glück, with whose music it is still occasionally performed in France and Germany.

Marthe le Rochois sang for ten years after the death of her master, who was succeeded in the management of the theatre for a short time by his son-in-law. Her salary was 1,000 livres. At last her strength gave way beneath her constant efforts, and she felt obliged to ask permission of the King to retire. Her final appearance was in the first representation of *L'Europe galante*, October 24th, 1697. She obtained leave to quit the stage, after twenty years of exertion, and Louis marked his sense of her merits by granting her a pension of 1,000 livres, to which the Duc de Sully added 500 livres. She was succeeded by the demoiselles Moreau, Desmâtins, and de Maupin.

Mdlle. le Rochois resided during the summer at a

little country-house which she had purchased at the village of Sartrouville-sur-Seine, four miles from the capital, and spent the winter in Paris; and her house was the resort of all the eminent artistes of the time. After enduring great physical sufferings with much resignation, she died October 28th, 1728, at Paris, and was buried in the church of St. Eustache. The naïve old historian of the opera, Durey de Noinville, gives her a charming character for amiability; and the Abbé de Chaulieu, her lover, addressed to her thirteen madrigals.

Mdme. la Maupin flourished at a somewhat later period. The history of this singer is like a wild romance. She was the daughter of the Sieur d'Aubigny, secretary to the Comte d'Armagnac, and was born in Paris in 1673. While yet almost a child, she married a gentleman named Maupin, of St. Germain-en-Laye, who obtained a government situation in a distant province. M. de Maupin had the folly to leave his child-wife in the capital, where, freed from all control, she, a wayward, untutored creature, threw herself into a succession of madcap enjoyments with all the impetuosity of her nature. She had a taste for masculine exercises and accomplishments, and having become acquainted with a man named Séranne, assistant in a fencing academy, took it into her head that she would learn fencing. She soon surpassed her master; and her audacious nature leading her to throw off all

restraint, she agreed to elope with him to Marseilles. In order to be more at liberty in travelling, she assumed male attire and the name of M. d'Aubigny. The guilty pair suddenly discovered that they had no money to live on; but as they both possessed fine voices, though totally ignorant of music, and were of showy exterior, they easily obtained employment at the opera-house of Marseilles. The voice of the supposed M. d'Aubigny was beautiful, sympathetic, and flexible, and she had a natural instinct for the truthful in nature and the effective in art; she always played male characters, and was very much admired as a clever singer and an elegant young man. A foolish girl of the city saw the supposed M. d'Aubigny on the stage, and, struck with his appearance, fell in love with him. Mdme. la Maupin, for a whim, encouraged this predilection; but the friends of the young lady, rightly disapproving of the acquaintance, placed her in a convent at Avignon. The actress followed her admirer, and resuming the feminine robes which she had discarded, applied to be received as a novice; being determined to carry off the young lady whom she had pursued. An opportunity soon presented itself; one of the nuns died, and was buried within the precincts of the convent; La Maupin with her own hand disinterred the corpse, laid it on the bed of the young Marseillaise, set fire to the chamber, and in the confusion made her escape with the infatuated girl. Immediately on

the discovery of this double crime, Mdme. la Maupin was arraigned in her theatrical name, and condemned to be burnt for contumacy, in default of appearing; she ran away to Provence, and the silly Marseillaise girl was restored to her friends.

For some time La Maupin lived by singing in the cabarets of the towns through which she passed. She was painfully conscious of the miseries of her vagabond life; but her ambition prompted her to strive to excel, although her audience was invariably of necessity rude and ignorant; she tried to sing her very best on every occasion, and to give expression and truth as far as she could to what she sang, and adopted every means of captivating, of moving her hearers: "I tried even to compose the words and airs of some chansonettes, which were liked well enough by my rough audiences," she says herself.

At length she arrived at Paris, and succeeded in gaining admittance to the school of Lulli. Two months after, she made her début, under her husband's name, at the Opera, as Pallas, in Lulli's *Cadmus et Hermione*. She was still almost ignorant of music, but her voice was so good and of such compass, and her memory was so tenacious, while the airs of Lulli were so simple, smooth, and easily learnt, that she managed very well. Her success was immense: she soon became a general favourite; her name was in everybody's mouth; her portrait was in every shop

window, and she was surrounded by admirers. She was excellent both in comic and serious parts, but it was in male characters that she shone more especially: for these her appearance and manners were well suited. Her fellow-actors regarded her with admiration, while they were kept in awe by her prowess; for whenever she fancied she had been insulted, she made no scruple of avenging herself. Dumenil, one of the singers, having offended her, she waylaid him one night in the Place des Victoires, and called on him to give her satisfaction; poor Dumenil, nigh fainting with terror, declined, when she gave him a drubbing, and carried off his snuff-box and watch as trophies. Next day Dumenil told the story after a fashion of his own, saying that three robbers had attacked him, and that he had defended himself valiantly, but being overpowered by numbers, he was vanquished and plundered. Mdme. la Maupin, who was standing near, suddenly stepped forward, and, with ineffable disdain, exclaimed, "Fellow! you are a base liar and poltroon. It was I alone who assaulted you; and as a proof, I restore your miserable property," flinging him, as she spoke, his watch and snuff-box.

Among those who frequented the green-room was a certain Baron de Servan, a fop and braggart, whose vanity knew no bounds. He had a Herculean figure, a loud voice, an overbearing manner, and was fond of boasting of the numerous duels in which he had been

engaged. One evening he was going over his list of the fair ones who had fallen victims to a passion for him, when he chanced to speak lightly of a young ballet-girl, Mdlle. Pérignon, whose irreproachable conduct had constantly defied calumny. A universal murmur of disapprobation at such a piece of ungenerosity ran round the green-room; but the baron persisted in his fatuity. Mdme. la Maupin, who was lounging on a cushion in a distant corner of the room, listening in silence to this scene, allowed the baron to speak as long as he pleased; then she suddenly rose, advanced, and addressed him haughtily: being dressed in her favourite doublet and hose, she looked a tall, imposing young cavalier. "Truly," she cried, "I admire the patience of these gentlemen. Your insolent and stupid falsehoods demand not only refutation, but prompt and exemplary chastisement. You are an infamous liar, and it is I who tell you so." "And pray, might I ask who are you, sir?" demanded the baron, trembling with rage. "The Chevalier de Raincy—a better gentleman than you; and one ready to give you a useful lesson," replied La Maupin, with a look of contempt. The lesson was an effectual one. The baron had one arm broken by a pistol-shot, and amputation was pronounced indispensable. His agony of rage when he discovered that the hand of a woman had vanquished him, is not to be described; and he retired from Paris to his estates.

Mdme. la Maupin sometimes carried her freaks to a height which would have subjected another to condign punishment. One evening, being (in her favourite masculine disguise) at a masked ball given at the Palais Royal by Monsieur the King's brother, she insulted a lady of rank so grossly that three of the lady's friends demanded satisfaction. She followed them to the gardens, and after a few passes, killed her antagonist; then returning to the ball-room, she went up to Monsieur, and, unmasking, told her story, and obtained his pardon.

Arrived at the height of fame and popularity, Mdme. la Maupin quitted France to fulfil a most advantageous engagement in Brussels, where she made a great sensation. The éclat of her adventures, the brilliancy of her beauty, and her surpassing talent, made the highest impression on the dilettanti and the strangers of distinction at that time collected in the capital of Belgium. The Elector of Bavaria threw himself at her feet; but after a time the Countess d'Arcos eclipsing her, the Elector sent the actress a purse of 40,000 francs (about 1,600*l.*), with an order to quit Brussels immediately. The husband of the countess happened to be the envoy; and the supplanted favourite received him with supreme disdain, flung the purse at his head, uttered several withering sarcasms, and turned her steps to Spain. She, however, retained the pension settled on her by the Elector.

The marvellous accounts which she had heard of Spain had greatly excited her imagination; and she fancied that in this delightful and happy region her success was certain; but she was soon cruelly undeceived, and became so reduced in circumstances that she was compelled to take a situation as femme-de-chambre to the Countess Marino, wife of the Minister. This lady, if the historian does not belie her, was extremely cross-grained and capricious; the unlucky soubrette suffered long without murmuring, being, with all her faults, very good-natured and somewhat careless in temper; but at last her patience was exhausted and she resigned her irksome post. She, however, determined to revenge herself, before going, for all she had endured. One day, having to dress the countess for a Court ball, in arranging the coiffure of the dame, the wicked ex-cantatrice placed a number of little red radishes, encircled by their leaves and secured by large black pins, in the "back hair" of her mistress; bedecking the front and sides with marabout feathers, so as to produce a charming effect. The countess glanced complacently in the glass, and departed in high spirits for the ball, where the decided sensation she created put her in a flutter of delighted vanity, until some considerate friend told her the truth; when, red with shame, and suffocating with rage, she rushed from the room. She regained her hotel in a towering passion, but did not find her traitorous wait-

ing-woman, who had prudently taken the road to Paris.

Mdme. la Maupin returned to Paris, and reappeared at the Opera. She discovered, however, that she no longer excited the enthusiasm which she had been accustomed to raise; the public were cold and reserved. Her voice was still fresh, her acting excellent, and her beauty undiminished; but during her absence many things had combined to alter the public taste. New performers had appeared, and the audience had become more exacting, more critical. Mdme. la Maupin was a bold, showy actress, but wanting in those delicate shades and niceties of expression which the public now demanded. Finding herself no longer an idol, a fit of penitence for a life misspent seized the poor siren; who regretted the dissipation of past years, and bewailed the errors of her youth.

One of her most ardent admirers was the Count d'Albert, an elegant and highly-accomplished nobleman, to whom, while he was in the camp of Maréchal Villars, La Maupin had addressed a poetical epistle, written with warmth of feeling and grace of expression. This effusion was subsequently attributed to Benserade, who had been dead for several years, and it is given in the *Anecdotes Dramatiques*, published 1775. La Maupin now wrote to Count d'Albert, in her remorse, explaining her motives for quitting the stage, and requesting his advice. The gallant cava-

lier, while testifying his personal regret, warmly counselled her to carry out her idea, encouraging her in every possible manner. She therefore finally decided, and returned all the presents given her by the cavaliers of the Court, retaining only the pension of the Elector of Bavaria. Her new-grown piety increasing, she resolved to retire from the world altogether, and wrote to her husband, desiring him to come home directly: that gentleman meekly obeyed. Madame la Maupin made her last curtsey to her whilom enthusiastic adorers in 1705, and spent the short remnant of her life in peace. This beautiful, misguided being died in 1707, at the early age of thirty-four.

CHAPTER V.

RIVAL QUEENS—FRANCESCA CUZZONI AND FAUSTINA BORDONI.

THESE famous sirens were the heroines of one of the greatest feuds recorded in the annals of the Italian stage. Little is known of the early career of either; but they had gained sufficient reputation to induce Handel, when at the height of his power as manager of the Opera, to bring, first the one and then the other, to England.

Francesca Cuzzoni, who was a native of Parma, arrived in London about the year 1723, and appeared for the first time that year in Handel's *Otho* (or *Ottone*), the most popular of all his operas. Her success was triumphant, and the directors, who gave her two thousand guineas for the season, were enabled, on the very second evening of her performance, to charge four guineas each ticket.

Delighted with her powers, Handel took the utmost pains to compose airs adapted to display her exquisite voice to advantage; but in return she treated him

with caprice and insolence; which at last became intolerable. One morning, at rehearsal, she was so refractory that she could not be persuaded to sing "Falsa imagina," in *Otho*, having raised some frivolous objections to certain passages in it. Handel, after reproaching her with certain former instances of stubbornness, seized her round the waist, and swore, if she persisted in her obstinacy, that he would fling her out of the window; a threat which, for the time being, brought her to her senses. He composed for her, among other airs calculated to show her voice to advantage, "Affanni del pensier," in *Otho;* an air so beautiful, that Mainwaring, an eminent master, who was not on good terms with Handel, said that "the great bear was certainly inspired when he wrote that song."

Her popularity was unbounded; and, although she was so "ugly, and ill-made," she was a special favourite with the gentlemen of her audience: a fact commemorated by sundry pungent epigrams. Her turbulent and obstinate temper, her ingratitude and insolence, are placed on record by the author of the *Essai sur la Musique*, printed at Paris; he relates that she once begged of an English gentleman a suit of lace, but not liking it when sent to her, she had the audacity to throw it on the fire.

Having driven Durastanti away, and finding that Anastasia Robinson had quitted the stage immediately

after her arrival in England, Cuzzoni fancied that she could do just as she pleased. But she had worn out the patience of the great composer whom it was her special delight to torture; and wearied with her follies, Handel never rested till he obtained the services of another singer who was then rising into fame. This was Faustina Bordoni, a Venetian lady of noble family, a pupil of Gasparini and Marcello. She was elegant in figure, and possessed the advantages of a handsome face and agreeable manners. She was now six-and-twenty, and had made her début in her native city, at the age of sixteen, in 1716, in an opera called *Ariodante*.

The directors were in ecstasies; they felt sure that with two such exquisite voices, forming so brilliant a contrast, and yet so harmonious, the Opera was made. Nor was it the first time that these vocalists had appeared together, for they had both been engaged at Venice in 1719, just seven years before. Unfortunately, the directors did not take into consideration Cuzzoni's peculiar disposition. Faustina appeared first in *Alexander*, May 5th, in which she was ably supported by Senesino, as the heroic Alexander.

From the night of her first appearance, Cuzzoni hated Faustina with a bitterness beyond expression. During the season previous, that of 1725, such was the *furore* for Cuzzoni, that the entire female fashionable world adopted the brown silk dress embroidered

with silver, which she wore in the opera of *Rodelinda:* "for a year the dress seemed a national uniform of youth and beauty," Burney says. And she was so secure of being able to dictate her own terms, that she disdainfully refused 240,000 livres offered by a director in Italy who desired to engage her for his theatre. But Cuzzoni foresaw, or chose to prophesy, that the beauty and amiability of her rival would eclipse her.

Faustina was in every way a contrast to her rival: she had the advantage in point of person, having a form of perfect symmetry, though *petite*, and a beautiful countenance, full of fire and intelligence; she was pleasant, amiable, and prudent, while Cuzzoni was disagreeable, ill-natured, and recklessly extravagant. As singers, the rivals were nearly on an equality; for Faustina's voice, whilst surpassing that of Cuzzoni in power of execution and a distinct manner of singing rapid passages, yet fell short of that command of expression which enabled Cuzzoni at will to bathe her audience in tears. Dr. Burney describes Cuzzoni's voice as being "equally clear, sweet, and flexible," and says that it was difficult for the hearer to determine whether she most excelled in slow or rapid airs. "A native warble enabled her to execute divisions with such facility as to conceal every appearance of difficulty; and so soft and touching was the natural tone of her voice, that she rendered pathetic whatever

she sang, in which she had leisure to unfold its whole volume. The art of conducting, sustaining, increasing, and diminishing her tones by minute degrees, acquired for her among professors the title of complete mistress of her art. In a cantabile air, though the notes she added were few, she never lost a favourable opportunity of enriching the cantilena with all the refinements and embellishments of the time. Her shake was perfect; she had a creative fancy, and the power of occasionally accelerating and retarding the measure in the most artificial manner by what the Italians call *tempo rubato*. Her high notes were unrivalled in clearness and sweetness, and her intonations were so just and fixed, that it seemed as if it were not in her power to sing out of tune."

Of Faustina's voice, Quantz—the celebrated instructor of Frederick II.—gave Dr. Burney a striking description. He was in London in 1727, and heard her sing. "Faustina," he says, "had a mezzo-soprano voice, that was less clear than penetrating. Her compass now was only from B flat to G in alt; but after this time she extended its limits downwards. She possessed what the Italians call *un cantar granito;* her execution was articulate and brilliant. She had a fluent tongue for pronouncing words rapidly and distinctly, and a flexible throat for divisions, with so beautiful a shake, that she put it in motion upon short notice, just when she would. The passages

might be smooth, or by leaps, or consisting of iterations of the same note; their execution was equally easy to her as to any instrument whatever. She was, doubtless, the first who introduced with success a swift repetition of the same note. She sang adagios with great passion and expression, but was not equally successful, if such deep sorrow were to be impressed on the hearer, as might require dragging, sliding, or notes of syncopation and *tempo rubato*. She had a very happy memory in arbitrary changes and embellishments, and a clear and quick judgment in giving to words their full power and expression. In her action she was very happy; and as her performance possessed that flexibility of muscles and features, which constitute face-play, she succeeded equally well in furious, amorous, and tender parts; in short, she was born for singing and acting."

In truth, the rivalry which Cuzzoni chose to organize was all the more absurd as their respective qualities were totally opposed, yet obviously calculated to act advantageously in unison. Tosi, their contemporary, declares: "Their merit is superior to all praise; for with equal strength, though in different styles, they help to keep up the tottering profession from immediately falling into ruins. The one is inimitable for a privileged gift of singing, and enchanting the world with an astonishing facility in executing difficulties with a brilliancy I know not whether derived from

nature or art, which pleases to excess. The delightful, soothing cantabile of the other, joined to the sweetness of a fine voice, a perfect intonation, strictness of time, and the rarest productions of genius in her embellishments, are qualifications as peculiar and uncommon as they are difficult to be imitated. The pathos of the one and the rapidity of the other, are distinctly characteristic. What a beautiful mixture it would be if the excellencies of these two angelic beings could be united in a single individual!"

Handel took sedulous care to compose for la Faustina, as he had hitherto done for his enemy Cuzzoni; he wrote for her the air "Alla sua gabbia d'oro," in *Alexander*, in the performance of which she "emulated the liquid articulation of the nightingale, and charmed the unprejudiced part of her hearers into ecstasy."

The public was soon divided into two parties, one maintaining that Cuzzoni was peerless, the other that Faustina was unapproachable. The Cuzzoni party was headed by the Countess of Pembroke; the Countess of Burlington and Lady Delawar led the Faustina squadron. The men generally favoured the Venetian beauty, in consequence of her lovely face and figure. To such an extravagant pitch was the spirit of rivalry carried, that Lady Walpole (Horace Walpole tells us), having the sirens at her house to sing at a concert, at which was present an

assemblage of the first persons in the kingdom, had the greatest difficulty to settle their precedence: one would not yield to the other. Finding it impossible to induce either to sing while the other was present, she took Faustina to a remote part of the mansion, under the pretext of showing her some curious china; meanwhile the company obtained an aria from Cuzzoni, who rejoiced in the idea that Faustina had fled discomfited. A similar device was practised in order to decoy Cuzzoni from the room while Faustina sang.

At first they behaved with tolerable civility towards each other, though this very soon wore off. Sir Robert Walpole having declared for Faustina, his lady, in order that Cuzzoni might not be borne down by his indifference to her talents, patronized her; and when Sir Robert was from home she used to invite both to dinner. She was at first perplexed how to arrange the precedence for them at her table, but they relieved her embarrassment by polite mutual concessions. Matters at last came to a climax. On the 20th June, 1727, there was a brilliant assemblage of rank, beauty, and fashion in the Opera House; and the Princess Caroline honoured the theatre with her presence that evening. The two *prime donne* were to appear together, and the partisans of each eagerly awaited the rising of the curtain. On their appearance there was a storm of mingled hisses and clapping of hands, which speedily swelled into a hurricane of

catcalls, shrieking, and stamping; the uproar was terrific, and not the slightest deference was paid to the presence of the princess. The following morning an account appeared in the *London Journal*, which must have astonished the loungers in coffee-houses. Epigrams, lampoons, libels, and duels, followed each other in rapid succession; and the town was in a ferment.

This riot led to the rival singers abandoning their entrenchment of feigned politeness; and one night they so far forgot themselves as to come to blows; the bystanders being unable to separate them till they had left sanguinary marks of their hostility on each other's faces? A farce called *Contretemps; or, the Rival Queens*, was performed at Heidegger's private theatre, near the Haymarket, a few days afterwards. Faustina, as the Queen of Bologna, and Cuzzoni, as Princess of Modena, exchange high words, seize each other by the hair, and then run off, Cuzzoni pursuing Faustina; while Handel, who has a small part consisting of three lines, advises that the antagonists be "left to fight it out, inasmuch as the only way to calm their fury is to let them satisfy it."

These conflicts proved so injurious to the interests of the Opera, that the directors resolved to end them by a stratagem. Cuzzoni had solemnly sworn never to accept one guinea less salary than Faustina; thus the directors offered Faustina, as the more attractive and more manageable prima donna, *one guinea*

more for the season; and Cuzzoni found herself outwitted. The Count di Kinsky, Austrian Ambassador, advised her to go to Vienna, and she quitted England for that capital, breathing vengeance on Faustina. The following lines were written by Ambrose Phillips on her departure :—

"Little siren of the stage,
Charmer of an idle age,
Empty warbler, breathing lyre,
Wanton gale of fond desire;
Bane of every manly art,
Sweet enfeebler of the heart;
Oh, too pleasing is thy strain,
Hence to southern climes again!
Tuneful mischief, vocal spell,
To this island bid farewell;
Leave us as we ought to be,
Leave the Britons rough and free."

Cuzzoni, while in London, married Pietro Giuseppe Sandoni, of Bologna, a harpsichord maker, and a composer. He had settled in England some years before, and made a little reputation, being chiefly remarkable for his skill in improvisation. The Countess of Pembroke was his patroness. At first Cuzzoni had brilliant success at the Court of Vienna; but soon her ridiculous pretensions and exaggerated demands (for she wanted to insist on 24,000 florins as her salary) entirely disgusted her patrons. She then left for Italy, saying that she could make as much as she pleased in her own country. She afterwards

made a tour in Holland, where she lived so extravagantly that she was at last imprisoned for debt.

Seven years after her flight from England she was singing (in 1734) at Lincoln's Inn Fields under peculiar circumstances. Senesino's squabbles with Handel had grown to such a height that the maestro refused any longer to compose for him, and it became impossible that they could remain in the same theatre. The public, however, sided with Senesino, and they subscribed for a new operatic establishment. On the 13th of June, 1733, the following advertisement appeared in the *Daily News*—"The subscribers to the opera in which Signor Senesino and Signora Cuzzoni are to perform, are desired to meet at Mr. Hickford's great room, in Panton Street, on Friday next, at eleven o'clock, in order to settle proper methods for carrying on the subscription. Such persons as cannot be present are desired to send their proxies." Porpora and Arrigoni were engaged to direct the music, under the control of Lord Cooper.

Handel, on his side, entered into an agreement with Heidegger for conducting an opera in partnership for the term of three years, and started for Italy to engage singers. At the opera abroad he heard both the great Farinelli and Carestini, but he made the mistake of engaging the latter. The opposition immediately engaged Farinelli, whose advent they announced with as much parade as if he had come as an envoy

on an important mission, and he was engaged to perform fifty nights during the season of 1734-5 for a salary of 1,500 guineas and a benefit. From the moment he reached London he created a furore. At the first private rehearsal after his arrival in the metropolis, in Cuzzoni's apartments, Lord Cooper, observing that the band did not accompany the singer, but were all gaping with wonder, desired them to be attentive, when they confessed that they had been so overpowered with admiration and astonishment as to be unable to follow him—an incident vouched for to Dr. Burney by one of the band.

Farinelli sang with Cuzzoni, Senesino, and the others, at the Duke's Theatre, and became ridiculously popular: from the highest nobles to the meanest citizens and their wives, all seemed to go mad about him. He was looked on as a prodigy, introduced to the King, accompanied on the harpsichord by the Princess of Orange, and invited to companies the most exclusive; those who tried to bungle over compliments to him in bad Italian, esteemed themselves happy if they received from him the condescension of a supercilious answer. At his first benefit, in 1733, the pit was filled at four o'clock, and the stage was covered with beauty and fashion; scenery was therefore dispensed with, the gilt leather hangings used at ridottos being substituted. Many of the songs in the opera were new; and that which preceded the

chorus being composed by Farinelli, was vehemently encored, though the chorus was over, and the musicians had quitted the orchestra.

In October, 1734, Handel changed to Lincoln's Inn Fields, while the opposition came to the Haymarket, and inaugurated the season with the opera of *Artaxerxes*, cast in a most powerful manner, Arbaces being performed by Farinelli, Artabanes by Senesino, Mandane by Cuzzoni. Until Farinelli arrived in England, Senesino had never had an opportunity of hearing him, and on the first occasion on which they sang together, Senesino filled the part of a furious tyrant, and Farinelli that of an unfortunate hero in chains; but in the course of the very first song, the latter so softened the heart of the enraged despot, that Senesino, forgetting his assumed character, ran to Farinelli and embraced him. According to Dibdin, Farinelli, now about thirty years old, was "as tall as a giant, and as thin as a shadow, therefore, if he had grace it could be only of a sort to be envied by a penguin or a spider." At the end of this season, Senesino, probably irritated at being thrown into the shade by the splendour of Farinelli's celebrity, retired to Sienna, his native place; and, having acquired a sum of 15,000*l.*, built a house which he afterwards bequeathed, with his fortune, to his relations.

After lingering some time, the rival Operas, from various causes, were broken up, and the singers were

dispersed. Cuzzoni went again on the Continent.* In the *London Daily Post* of September 7, 1741, there appeared a startling piece of intelligence:—"We hear from Italy, that the famous singer, Mrs. C–z–ni, is under sentence of death to be beheaded, for poisoning her husband." The sentence, if ever pronounced, was never put into execution. Seven years after this, in 1749, she appeared for the third and last time in England, when she took a benefit concert, on the 18th of May, at the little theatre in the Haymarket, at which Felice Giardini, who afterwards became manager of the Opera, made his first appearance in this country. She issued a preliminary advertisement, avouching her "pressing debts" and her "desire to pay them" as the reason for her asking the benefit; which, she declared, should be the last she would ever trouble the public with. Old, poor, and almost deprived of her voice by her infirmities, her attempt to revive the interest of the public in her favour was a miserable failure; her star was set for ever, and she was obliged to return to Holland, more wretched than she came. She had scarcely re-appeared there, when she was again thrown into prison for debt; but by entering into an agreement to sing at the theatre every night, under surveillance, she was enabled to obtain her release. Her recklessness and improvidence had

* It is not quite certain whether it was during her first or second visit that she married Sandoni.

brought her to a pitiable condition: and in her latter days, after a career of splendour, caprice, and extravagance, she was obliged to subsist, it is said, by button-making; she died in frightful indigence, the recipient of charity at a hospital at Bologna, in 1770.

A far different fate awaited Faustina. In 1726 she left England for Vienna, where she obtained an appointment of 15,000 florins. The next season she was singing in Venice, in the bloom of her beauty, the object of universal admiration. It happened that Adolfo Hasse was director of the orchestra at the same time, and in the flush of his celebrity; the Italian theatres intrigued for the honour of his services, and he was called *Il caro Sassone*. Faustina saw him for the first time. "Having once heard Hasse play upon the harpsichord, she immediately fell in love with him," says one biographer. He was appointed chapel-master in the *conservatorio degli incurabili;* but his increasing reputation attracted the attention of the King of Poland, and his Majesty offered him the place of chapel-master at Dresden. Faustina was singing there, for the first time, in 1731, and they consequently met again, they were mutually pleased, they were nearly of the same age (Hasse being one year older than Faustina), and they were married in 1736. The King, desiring to retain both, offered them 12,000 dollars to stay at Dresden, and Hasse accepted the offer; but being pressed to remain in Italy, he divided

his time between the two countries. The couple remained seven years in the service of the Court of Dresden. King Augustus, who squandered immense sums on pictures and musicians, gave Hasse unlimited power and ample resources, of which he availed himself to place the Dresden opera on the most complete and splendid footing. At length, however, the weak, proud, and extravagant royal amateur was compelled to dismiss numbers from his service; among others Hasse and his wife, who were obliged to be satisfied with a small pension. They came to England in 1740, where they were received most flatteringly.

In December, 1747, Faustina sang before Frederick the Great, in the opera of *Arminio;* the monarch was so charmed with the freshness of her voice, although she was then forty-six, that he sent the composer a present of 1,000 dollars, and a diamond ring, as tokens of the pleasure he had received from the performance. Eight years after, she was still able to sing, but her voice had lost its flexibility, and her intonation was uncertain. She finally quitted the stage in the winter of 1753.

In 1760, Hasse suffered much from the bombardment of Dresden by the Prussians, losing, among other property, all his manuscripts; this was a heavy loss, as he was about to publish a complete collection of his works, the expense of which the King had promised to defray. He resided with Faustina in Vienna, till

about 1775, when they retired to Venice, the birthplace of Faustina. Dr. Burney visited them in 1773, when they were living in a handsome house in the Landstrass, Berlin, and were rather a humdrum couple; Hasse suffering from the gout, and the lovely Faustina of former years changed into a jolly, chatty matron of seventy-two, with a couple of pretty daughters. As the doctor approached their residence, with the Abate Taruffi, he perceived Faustina at the window; who, seeing them stop at the door, came to meet her visitors. "I was presented to her by my conductor," says the doctor. "She is a short, brown, sensible, and lively old woman; and said she was much pleased to see a *cavaliere Inglese*, as she had been honoured with great marks of favour in England. Signor Hasse soon entered the room. He is tall and rather large in size, but it is easy to imagine that in his younger days he must have been a robust and fine figure; great gentleness and goodness appear in his countenance and manners."

Going to see them a second time, the doctor found all the family at home, and enjoyed a "cheerful and social visit." He was delighted with Faustina, who, he says, was "very conversable, and still possessed of much curiosity concerning what is transacting in the world." She had a wonderful store of musical reminiscences; and he observes that "she has likewise good remains, for seventy-two, of that beauty for

which she was so much celebrated in her youth, but none of her fine voice. I asked her to sing. 'Ah, non posso!—ho perduto tutte le mie facoltà.' 'Alas! I am no longer able,' said she, 'I have lost all my faculties.'" "I was extremely captivated," adds the doctor, "with the conversation of Signor Hasse. He was easy, communicative, and rational, equally free from pedantry, pride, and prejudice. He spoke ill of no one; but, on the contrary, did justice to the talents of several composers that were occasionally named: even to those of Porpora, who, though his first master, was ever after his greatest rival." He played on the piano for Burney on this occasion, in spite of the gout, which had attacked his fingers; and then his daughters, two agreeable young ladies, sang for the doctor to his great gratification. One was a "sweet soprano," the other a "rich and powerful contralto, fit for any church or theatre in Europe;" both girls "having good shakes," and "such an expression, taste, and steadiness as it is natural to expect in the daughters and scholars of Signor Hasse and Signora Faustina."

Faustina and her husband both died in 1783, she eighty-three, he eighty-four.

CHAPTER VI.

CATERINA MINGOTTI.

CATERINA MINGOTTI,* born at Naples, about 1726, was the daughter of Valentini, an officer in the Austrian service, and a native of Carinthia, a German province in the dominions of Austria. While she was yet an infant, her father went to Gratz, in Silesia, accompanied by his wife and three little girls. Soon after their arrival Valentini died, and left his youngest child to the care of her uncle, who placed the little girl in a convent of the Ursulines at Gratz, intending that ultimately she should take the veil. Here she quickly evidenced an ardent love of music: she would sit for hours entranced, listening to the delicious strains of the choir. At last she went to the abbess, and with tears in her eyes, in trembling, confused accents, timidly begged that she would give her lessons, so that she too might be able to join in the singing.

* Signora Mingotti is called Caterina by almost all her biographers, but Mancini, her contemporary, gives her the name of Regina, which is adopted by Schilling. As she is best known by the name of Caterina, however, it is, perhaps, judicious to retain it.

The abbess promised to "take her request into consideration," and the next day sent one of the elder nuns to ask her who had suggested her idea of learning music. The child answered that no one had said anything to her about it; but her own love for music had inspired the thought. The superior, finding that the child really had an excellent voice and a correct ear, decided on granting her request, and on giving her a musical education. She promised to give the little petitioner lessons of half-an-hour's duration every day, being unable to afford more time; and in these lessons she taught her the first elements of music, the solfeggio, and the first principles of accompaniment, the young girl taking the contralto and the abbess the soprano. She preserved all her life the little book in which was written the text of her first lessons, with explanations in the German language.

Caterina remained with the nuns till she was fourteen, when the death of her uncle totally changed her future. She returned to her mother and sisters, when she found herself in a very uncomfortable situation. The elder girls, discovering that she understood nothing of domestic duties, jeered her unceasingly about her beautiful voice, telling her that she might be very clever, but that it would require a very skilful person to find out her abilities, for she was entirely useless in the house, and that one quick pair of hands was worth all the fine voices in the world. Her desire of escap-

ing the tyranny to which she was subjected induced her to accept the matrimonial offers of Signor Mingotti, a Venetian, impresario of the Opera at Dresden, a man advanced in years, and for whom she had not a spark of affection. She went with him to Dresden, where the famous Nicolo Porpora, then in the service of the King of Poland, heard her, and spoke so rapturously of her talents that offers were made to Mingotti to engage her for the Elector. Mingotti had faithfully promised that she should never be obliged to sing in public; but he had never had the smallest intention of keeping his word, and was now overjoyed at the prospect of making a fortune through the abilities of his fair young wife. He represented to Caterina in glowing colours all the advantages which were to be derived from entering the service of the Court of Dresden, and told her how honoured and happy she ought to feel. Caterina, who at first thought it was a jest, refused to entertain the idea for an instant; but he angrily insisted, and she accepted the engagement in much the same spirit as she had accepted her marriage. She was then placed with Porpora, for the purpose of finishing her musical education.

Faustina was at that time the reigning cantatrice at Dresden, although she was no longer young; her husband, Hasse, hated Porpora, and he was furious at learning that Porpora received a hundred crowns

a month for training a singer who was to rival Faustina, while he himself received only three or four hundred crowns a year. He thereupon indited a string of epigrams against Porpora, of which the only one that remains spitefully points out Mingotti as the last refuge of Porpora, the last branch to which he was clinging: *un clou pour s'accrocher!* But no petty jealousy interfered with Mingotti's plans.

Caterina appeared in Metastasio's *Attilio Regolo*, and was greeted with unbounded applause. She was pleasant-looking and plump, with a very expressive countenance, if a portrait by Mengs is to be trusted. Her style of singing was excellent, nay, grand; and "such," observes Burney, "as discovered her to be a perfect mistress of her art." She played with verve and boldness, and evinced fire and intelligence, disdaining ancient tradition, with inspiration and genius which took the spectators by storm. Most of her critics, however, even those who were her warmest admirers, were of opinion that her manner "would have been even more irresistible if she had had a little more female grace and softness." For this reason she was more admired in men's characters. The mild Faustina was supposed to be enraged at Caterina's success, and people thought she quitted Dresden in an ungovernable fit of jealousy.

Having attained eminence, and the approval of Dresden, Caterina speedily obtained engagements else-

where, and was able to dictate her own terms. She was invited to Naples, where she made her first appearance as Aristea in the *Olimpiade*, composed by Galuppi; in which part she gained extravagant applause, not only by her fine singing, but the new reading which, as an actress, she gave the character. Before going to Italy she applied herself so assiduously to the study of the Italian language that, when she appeared at Naples, she surprised the audience as much by the purity of her pronunciation as by her melodious voice and expressive, natural style of acting.

On her way from Dresden she passed through Vienna, when she called on Metastasio: entering his room unannounced and abruptly, in order to secure an interview and a letter to the Princess di Belmonte. It was early in the morning when she surprised the poet, and, being attired in a "military habit," and attended by "all the graces of youth, vivacity, and talents," the heroine of his *Attilio*, she made a conquest of him at once.

She was offered engagements from numerous theatres, but being in the service of the Court at Dresden, her delicacy dictated a refusal, and she returned to the scene of her first triumphs; to the disgust of her husband, who knew she was rejecting the most brilliant offers. Dresden was not ungrateful for her constancy, and her salary was considerably raised

(from three or four hundred crowns) when she resumed her duties. She repeated her character in the *Olimpiade* with splendid success. Hasse, who was just then engaged in the composition of his *Demofoonte*, and who, having been absent on a visit to England, was again in Dresden in his capacity of chapel-master, had not forgiven her for eclipsing his wife, the Faustina. He, therefore, insidiously offered to compose for the young vocalist the adagio "Se tutti i mali miei," which he did with a pizzicato violin accompaniment so arranged that any faults she might commit in singing it should be distinctly heard. Though pleased with the air on trying it over, Caterina Mingotti quickly perceived the snare that was laid for her, and resolved to baffle her enemy, she sang the piece on the first night of performance in so exquisite and conscientious a manner that even Faustina, who listened with strained ears, was forced to admit she was faultless. Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, then ambassador from England at the Court of Dresden, who was the friend of Hasse and of Faustina, went everywhere saying that la Mingotti could not sing soft and pathetic airs; but when he heard her sing Hasse's adagio, deeply regretting what he had done, he entreated her pardon for the injustice of which he had been guilty, and remained her constant friend and zealous defender ever after.

In 1752 she went to Madrid, in company with the

modest Signor Gizziello (Giovachino Conti), having been invited by Farinelli, who was director of the Opera there. Scarcely had she settled in the Spanish capital before she found the control of the all-powerful vocalist and manager extremely irksome. He was so rigid, so intolerant, that he would not permit her even to practise in a room overlooking the street, and would not grant her leave to sing anywhere but in the Opera or at Court. The Spanish nobility, eager to hear the charming cantatrice, overwhelmed her with pressing invitations to sing at private concerts and balls, but she was compelled to decline all such offers. Once Farinelli was forced to yield. A lady, in a very delicate state of health, felt a particular desire to hear Signora Mingotti, but was unable to gratify it by a visit to the theatre, fearing the excitement of the scene. Her husband urgently pressed on Farinelli the request that Mingotti should visit the invalid, but received a decided refusal; the señora persisted, and her lord, wishing to indulge her, went at length to the King, and laid a complaint before him. His majesty immediately issued a royal mandate that Mingotti was to receive the lady at her house, and to sing for her; to which behest Farinelli, much against his inclination, was obliged to bow.

The Opera in England at this time was under the direction of Vaneschi, and the haughty and capricious Felice Giardini, who had arrived in London in the

spring of 1749, was director of the orchestra. He had made his first appearance at a benefit for Cuzzoni, at the little theatre in the Haymarket, when he played a solo composed by Martini of Milan, and had created a great sensation. He had introduced a new discipline, and a new style of playing, which greatly conduced to the advancement of music; in fact his coming forms a memorable epoch in the instrumental music of this kingdom. The Opera was at this period far from being in a flourishing condition; there were no eminent singers in England, and the public took very little interest in the proceedings at the Opera House. Such was the disdain evinced towards the singers that, when a nobleman or gentleman wished to engage any of them for a concert, he sent his steward or butler to haggle with them about the price, "as they would for meat at a butcher's shambles." Vaneschi, hoping to revive the failing enterprise, brought together a new company, and in the autumn of 1754 sent to invite Signora Mingotti to England. She gladly quitted Spain and the irksome Farinelli, bearing with her a valuable diamond necklace, the gift of the Queen, as a testimony to her talent, and came at once to London, passing through Paris.

On the 9th November, 1754, the theatre opened with *Ipermestra*, an opera composed by Hasse and Lampugnani, in which there was a charmingly plaintive air, by the former composer, "Tu sai ch'io sono

amante," which Mingotti sang exquisitely; but the English public did not appreciate her power till she sang the celebrated "Se tutti i mali miei," which she introduced in *Demofoonte*. Ricciarelli, the leading male singer, had a neat and pleasing style, with a clear, flexible, and silver-toned voice; Ciprandi, the second singer, possessed taste and feeling; and Signora Columba Mattei, the second donna, was, according to Dr. Burney, "a charming singer and a spirited and intelligent actress, who soon afterwards became a great favourite as first woman." The remaining remarkable singers were Curioni and Mandini.

The English public were delighted with the brilliant Italian vocalist, and the popularity of the lyric theatre revived magically. The opera of *Ipermestra* ran eleven nights before Christmas, and was several times performed afterwards. Mingotti continued to sing with uninterrupted popularity till she suddenly fell ill, and her place had to be supplied in *Riccimero* by another singer, Frasi, about whom the public cared nothing. The public, suspecting that her illness was merely a "convenient cold," chose to be considerably out of humour, till she resumed her duties by appearing in Metastasio's (or, rather, Hasse's) admirable piece of *Demofoonte*, in which she gained much applause. She was very angry at the harshness which made no allowance for occasional indisposition or loss of voice, and years afterwards complained to Dr. Burney of

having been frequently hissed by the English because she had the toothache, a cold, or a fever; to which, she said, the good people of England would readily allow every human being to be liable except an actor or a singer. She continued to sing with few intervals till the November of the year following, 1755, when an ill-timed indisposition on the production of Jomelli's *Andromaca* again obliged her to relinquish her part to Frasi; whereby the success of the opera was seriously diminished. Her extraordinary popularity did not permit her to escape from envious criticism, and a dramatic satire was brought out called *Lethe*, in which Mrs. Clive sang a song from an Italian opera, written for the purpose of giving a ridiculous imitation of Signora Mingotti.

As a singer, it is not surprising that she should not have been on good terms with Vaneschi; and she had hardly commenced singing for him before she began squabbling with him; at length their disputes rose to a height which rivalled the celebrated fights between Handel and Bononcini, or Faustina and Cuzzoni, which had excited the fashionable and musical world thirty years before. The *beau monde* at once marshalled itself into two parties, one coming forward as the champion of the foreign vocalist, the other taking up arms for the manager. The anecdotes which have been recorded of the contention present a curious picture of the manners of the time. Ladies of the highest fashion

took up the matter as if it had been a personal affair, and permitted it to occupy their principal time and attention. Among others, Mrs. Fox Lane, afterwards Lady Bingley, one of the most courtly leaders of *ton*, entered into the quarrel with great zest, as a vehement partisan of Mingotti. One day, the Hon. General Crewe called upon her, when she eagerly begged him to give his opinion as to the merits of the dispute between Mingotti and Vaneschi; the general, having listened with exemplary patience to a long tirade on the points at issue, innocently inquired,—"And pray, madam, WHO is Signora Mingotti?" "Get out of my house!" shrieked the fashionable dame, in a towering passion. "You shall never hear her sing another note here as long as you live!"

Mrs. Fox Lane was in the habit of giving the newly introduced "private concerts" at her house, at which Mingotti, with Giardini, used to perform, in company with several of the most distinguished dilettanti, and as it was impossible to hear the amateurs elsewhere, of course there was no humiliation or sacrifice to which fashionable people would not submit for the sake of obtaining an invitation; of which fact the lady was so conscious that she never let an opportunity escape of demanding contributions for her *protégées*. At these concerts the pupils of the prima donna and the talented violinst would perform; Mrs. Fox Lane, Lady Milbanke, and Lady Edgecumbe, taking the

harpsichord, while Lady Rockingham, the dowager Lady Carlisle, and Miss Pelham, sang. Whenever a benefit was in contemplation for either of her favourite performers, their patroness would levy "black mail" on everybody she knew, in the coolest manner imaginable. "Come," she would say to her friends and acquaintances, "give me five guineas!" without condescending even to inform them whether they should be favoured with tickets in return. She was Giardini's friend to the last, for on her death-bed she bequeathed him 400*l.* per annum.

The quarrels between Mingotti and Vaneschi were only terminated by the latter being reduced to bankruptcy, and finding himself first a prisoner in the Fleet, and then a fugitive. On his failure, Mingotti and Giardini were seized with the fatal ambition which has lured so many to ruin, and undertook the management of the Opera, in partnership. At first they appeared to prosper, but a very short time betrayed a different state of things; and in 1757 they discovered themselves to be in a fair way to share poor Vaneschi's fate: by the end of the season their adventurous folly had involved them in such difficulties that they gladly resigned the sovereignty of the Opera. Giardini supported himself by once more giving instruction in music, while Mingotti hastily quitted the scene of her triumph and humiliation, and after singing for five years in the principal cities

in Italy, settled in 1765 at Munich. Her unfortunate speculation in London had absorbed the fortune which she had acquired by years of diligence, and left her with an income barely sufficient to support her respectably with economy. Dr. Burney who visited her in 1772, during his tour, found her occupying a very agreeable position, however. "She seemed to live very comfortably, was well received at Court, and esteemed by all who were able to judge of her understanding and enjoy her conversation." He describes her conversation as highly interesting and instructive. "It gave me great pleasure," he continues, "to hear her speak concerning practical music, which she does with as much intelligence as any *maestro di cappella* with whom I ever conversed. Her knowledge of singing and powers of expression, in different styles, are truly amazing, and must delight all such as can receive satisfaction from song, unconnected with the blandishments of youth and beauty. She speaks three languages—German, French, and Italian—so well that it is difficult to say which of them is her own. English she likewise speaks, and Spanish, well enough to converse in them, and understands Latin, but in the three languages first mentioned she is truly eloquent."

She retired in 1787 to Neuborg, on the Danube, taking up her residence with her son, Samuel von Buckingham, inspector of woods and forests. As was usual with vocalists at that period, she trained and

brought forward several pupils; one of whom, a German girl, was engaged in 1791 as "first woman" at the Haymarket. Lord Mount Edgecumbe, in his *Reminiscences*, mentions having heard Signora Mingotti when she came to England with this pupil, and says that the signora had then a strong, though tremulous voice, and gave him some of her most admired old songs. He heard her at Munich also, when he called to see her; his family having been among the number of her friends and patrons when she was formerly in England.

Signora Mingotti finally resided at Neubòrg, on the Danube, with her son; where she died in 1807, at the advanced age of eighty-one.

CHAPTER VII.

CATERINA GABRIELLI.

About the middle of the eighteenth century, the celebrated Cardinal Gabrielli had in his service a favourite cook, who had two daughters: Caterina, born at Rome the 12th of November, 1730, and Francesca. Caterina was lively, audacious, and possessed an unusual share of beauty, a fine voice, and an accurate ear. Her father was fully aware of his child's vocal talents, but unable to afford the means of cultivating them, and was obliged to content himself with taking her frequently to the Teatro Argentina, thus giving her an opportunity of hearing the great singers. Caterina profited so far by these chance lessons, that she learnt with ease the most difficult pieces, and repeated them with fluency. Her musical gifts came to light when she was fourteen years of age.

The cardinal was one day walking in his gardens, when a flood of untutored notes burst on his ear, resolving itself into a very brilliant arietta by Galuppi. His eminence had often heard these wood-notes wild,

but had never given them more than a passing thought; on this occasion, however, he listened for some time with pleased attention, and at length, turning to some of his attendants, he asked who was the young virtuoso who enchanted his gardens? The reply was, that the songstress was the daughter of his cook. "S'è così," said he, smiling, "il mio cuoco deverra presto un asino d'oro." He sent for Caterina, and made her go through her whole stock of arias; a task which she willingly performed. Delighted with her talent, he immediately took upon himself the charge of the girl's education, and placed her under the care of Garcia (Lo Spagnoletto), and afterwards of Porpora. Her princely protector watched her progress with a keen eye, and frequently gave concerts, in order to exhibit to his friends the youthful marvel. Her training was completed in the conservatorio of L'Ospedaletto, in Venice, while it was under the direction of Sacchini, who succeeded Galuppi.

Having gone through a rigid course of instruction, Caterina made her appearance at the age of seventeen, in 1747, at the Theatre of Lucca, as prima donna in Galuppi's *Sofonisba;* and La Cuochetina, as she was called, from her father's profession, produced a frenzy of enthusiasm. She was beautiful, intelligent, witty, and full of liveliness and grace; her only personal defect being a slight squint perceptible in the right eye, which, however, had the effect of imparting a

roguish, piquant expression to her countenance; and she was an excellent actress. Though of low stature, as sketched by Burney, "there was such grace and dignity in her gestures and deportment, as caught every unprejudiced eye; indeed, she filled the stage, and occupied the attention of the spectators so much, that they could look at nothing else while she was in view." No indication of her mean origin betrayed itself in her face or figure, for she carried herself with all the haughty grandeur of a Roman matron. Her voice, though not powerful, was of exquisite quality and wonderful extent, its compass being nearly two octaves and a half, and perfectly equable throughout. Her facility in vocalization was extraordinary: and her execution is described by Dr. Burney as rapid, but never so excessive as to cease to be agreeable; but in slow movements her pathetic tones, as is often the case with performers renowned for "dexterity," were not sufficiently touching.

No sooner had she appeared than her fame was established, both for talent and for beauty; the young cavaliers of Lucca spared no efforts to gain the favour of the haughty, capricious songstress, who laughed at all alike, and kept them in a state of mingled vexation and admiration by her whims and espiègleries. She infinitely preferred her theatrical comrades to even the greatest lords; and towards Guadagni, with whom she sang most frequently, she

testified marked favour; and he was naturally flattered by her undisguised preference. Guadagni had a delightful voice, and irreproachable taste, and his attitudes were so full of grace and dignity, that they would have been "excellent studies for a sculptor." He was not at all jealous of Gabrielli's talents, but gave her very serviceable counsel.

Her reputation extending, she was invited to sing by all the leading managers in Italy; she resided at Naples after a brilliant tour, living there in great splendour, and in 1750 she appeared at the San Carlo, in the *Didone* of Jomelli. The exquisite taste with which she sang the air, "Son regina e sono amante," established for ever her renown. Metastasio heard her, and delighted with her genius, devoted himself to finish her musical education, especially in the delivery of recitative. It was surmised that the courtly, impressionable poet was not proof against the manifold charms and witcheries of his lovely pupil; but the coquettish vocalist was deaf to his passion, her worldly heart being now entirely bent on making a conquest of those who could afford to gratify her desire of accumulating wealth. Moreover, Metastasio, although still adored by the ladies and petted by kings and princes, was now fifty-three, and eternally complained of his nerves and his ailments. Gabrielli made no scruple of deceiving the grand seigneurs who, infatuated by her wiles, laid the most superb offerings at

her feet; she received their gifts, laughed at them, and coolly dismissed them when she could gain nothing more; yet many of them, for the mere pleasure of exchanging a word with her, would linger for hours in her ante-chamber.

Francis I., probably at the instigation of Metastasio, had invited her to Vienna, and appointed her first cantatrice of his Court; and during her residence there a *contretemps* occurred which had very nearly proved fatal. The French ambassador paid assiduous court to her, and was the recipient of her sunniest smiles, while she secretly favoured the Portuguese ambassador, whose generosity furnished a great part of the money which surrounded her with such profuse luxury. At length the Frenchman, suspecting himself to be betrayed, resolved to watch her conduct, and found means to conceal himself in her house. He had not waited long ere he beheld his rival issue from her apartment, when, transported with jealous rage, he sprang out frantically, and made a thrust at her with his rapier; fortunately the fashionable whalebone boddice which she wore intercepted the thrust, and she received only a slight wound. At the sight of her blood, the Frenchman relented, and, recalled to his senses, he fell on his knees and poured forth a torrent of self-reproaches, and entreaties for pardon for the outrage of which he had been guilty. She deigned to forgive him on condition that he should

give her the sword with which he had inflicted the wound; her intention being to preserve it as a trophy, and to have engraved on it this inscription: "Epée de M——, qui osa frapper la Gabrielli." The ambassador, justly fearing the ridicule which would be cast on him if this idea was carried into effect, flew to Metastasio, and besought him to intercede in his behalf, and Gabrielli was prevailed on to relinquish the weapon. Fortunately for the repose of mankind, as Brydone, in his *Tour*, remarks, the faults of this dangerous siren were so very apparent, for had she been more perfect, "she must have made dreadful havoc in the world; though with all her deficiencies," he says, "she was supposed to have achieved more conquests than any one woman breathing." Her caprice was so stubborn, that neither interest nor flatteries, nor threats, nor punishment, had the least power over it: she herself declared that she could not command it, but that it for the most part commanded her. The best expedient to induce her to sing when she was in a bad humour was to prevail upon her favourite lover to place himself in the principal seat of the pit, or the front of a box, and if they were on good terms—which was seldom the case, however,—she would address her tender airs to him, and exert herself to the utmost. When Brydone was in Sicily, her lover promised to give him an example of his power over her. "He took his seat accordingly;

but Gabrielli, probably suspecting the connivance, would take no notice of him; so even this expedient does not always succeed."

Gabrielli quitted Vienna in 1765, laden with riches, and went to Sicily, where she excited the same enthusiasm, and exercised her caprice, regardless of consequences. Her insolence knew no bounds, yet no one dared to check her; she demanded and obtained whatever terms she chose, and sang when, where, and how she pleased; sometimes declining to sing altogether, or sending her sister, Francesca, whom she retained as second singer, to perform her parts. No matter with whom she came in contact, she compelled them to give way to her whims. On one occasion, the Viceroy of Sicily invited her to dine with him and with some of the highest nobility of Palermo, and at the appointed time, finding she did not make her appearance, the Viceroy despatched a servant to remind her of her promise. She was found lounging on her sofa with a book in her hand; and on the man respectfully presenting his message, she affected to have entirely forgotten the invitation: an insult which the Viceroy was at first inclined to pardon; but when, during the opera, she acted with the most intolerable negligence, and sang all the airs *sotto voce*, he was so indignant that he threatened to visit her with some token of his displeasure. This did not make the slightest impression on the stubborn canta-

trice: she declared that she might be forced to *cry*, but not to *sing*. The Viceroy, exasperated by her impudent obstinacy, at length committed her to prison for twelve days. She gave costly entertainments, paid all the debts of her fellow-prisoners, and distributed large sums among the indigent, besides singing all her best songs in her finest style every day, until the term of her detention expired, when she came forth amidst the shouts and rejoicings of the grateful poor whom she had benefited while in jail.

Two years later, in 1767, she went to Naples, where she received 2,000 sequins for singing during the Carnival. From thence she went to Parma, where the Infanté Don Ferdinand saw and fell desperately in love with her. As he was able to gratify her extravagance, she was unusually complacent to him, despite his homely person; but she was so annoyed by his fits of blind, ungovernable jealousy that they were rarely at peace. Scarcely an hour passed in which they would not quarrel and bandy recriminations; he accusing her, justly, of being too gracious to his rivals, and she furiously retorting. Enraged at her conduct, he kept her once, for many days, shut up in his house in a chamber of which he retained the key; this led naturally to further outbreaks of passion, in which Gabrielli did not pause to measure her expressions. At last, one day, the prince being jealous of an English nobleman, they had a terrible scene, and she

20012 xx a 14

angrily termed him a "gobbo maladetto"—"accursed hunchback!" Carried beyond himself by this, and by various other impertinences of which she was guilty, the Infanté slammed the door on her, locked it, placed the key in his pocket, and walked off. He then seized upon some pretext for throwing her into prison; but on entering the jail, Gabrielli was astonished to find an apartment furnished with the utmost magnificence, and a number of servants waiting to obey her slightest wish. It was a gallery belonging to the Infanté, and had been arranged by him for her reception. He soon came to visit her, and spared no pains to make his peace; but Gabrielli, who was piqued, and possessed a spirit not easily cowed, as soon as he left her, coolly opened the window, and made her exit through it, scaled the walls of the garden, and made her escape. She then went to Russia, where Catherine II. received her with every token of favour, and readily engaged her. But when the terms of her salary came to be discussed, the fair Italian demanded five thousand ducats. "Five thousand ducats!" repeated the Empress in amazement. "Why, I do not give more than that to one of my field-marshals!" "Very well," replied the Gabrielli, with her customary nonchalance; "your majesty may get your field-marshals to sing for you." This audacious reply made the Empress laugh, and instead of despatching the impertinent cantatrice to exercise her voice in the

clear atmosphere of Siberia, she immediately granted the required sum.

The beautiful Italian found her new position so agreeable that she remained for three years; during which time no peculiarity of individual character, national manner, or Court etiquette, escaped her quick observation. At the termination of her engagement she quitted Russia, laden with diamonds, a pocket-book stuffed with bank-notes, and a revenue of 20,000 francs. She was then invited to England. She ought at this time to have left the stage, for she was now beginning to be somewhat advanced in years, and her rare beauty already betrayed the influence of time; but vanity retained her on the scene of her former triumphs. At first she did not deign to accept the invitation to England: "I should not be mistress of my own will," she said, "and whenever I might have a fancy not to sing, the people would insult, perhaps misuse me; it is better to remain unmolested, were it even in a prison." At this period, a German singer named Schindlerin, a "weak and moderate performer," was the leading cantatrice in London, dividing the favour of the town with Miss Cecilia Davies, a fair young English singer of growing celebrity.

At last the Gabrielli agreed to sing in London, bargaining that her favourite, Signor Manzoletto, should be engaged as first male singer. Signor Rauzzini, the

successor of Millico, was in the height of his popularity when this stipulation was made. Rauzzini was young and handsome, had an agreeable countenance, and was an animated actor, with a sweet though not powerful voice, and a taste at once elegant and scientific. On her way to England, in 1775, Gabrielli sang at Venice, at the Theatre S. Benedetto, with the celebrated Pacchierotti. She had the reputation of eclipsing all who sang with her; this Pacchierotti knew, and although he was as great a favourite as his far-famed countryman, Farinelli, had been, he "gave himself up for lost" when he heard her. She executed an *aria di bravura* in a style so astonishing that, when it was half over, the unlucky signor "burst out crying," and ran behind the scenes, lamenting that he had dared to appear on the same stage with so wonderful a vocalist, where his talents must not only be lost, but where he must ever be accused of presumption, which he hoped was foreign to his character. "Povero me!" he cried, in despair. "Povero me! questo è un portento!" "Unfortunate that I am! Here is a prodigy." She was then forty-seven years of age. It was with some difficulty that he could be prevailed on to appear again; but finding himself much applauded, he regained his courage, and in singing a tender air, addressed to Gabrielli in the character of her lover, deeply touched the imperious prima donna, while the audience were melted to tears.

From whatever cause it might be, the fair Gabrielli, whose fame as a beauty, a coquette, and a singer, had preceded her, did not take the London world by storm; nor were the young bloods and bucks ready to fight for her smiles after the fashion of their compeers in the continental cities which rang with her conquests. She was lazy and insolent, and would not take the smallest trouble to please the fastidious London audience; sometimes choosing to be indisposed on nights when she ought to have especially roused her best energies, and throwing up her parts to her sister, Francesca, whom she carried about with her to act as seconda donna, and occasionally as her double. The operas in which she appeared during her stay in London were *Didone*, by Sacchini; *Cajo Mario*, by Piccini; and *La Vestale*, by Vento. The only criticism of her performance extant is by Lord Mount Edgecumbe, who saw her in the opera of *Didone;* but he avows honestly that he could say nothing more of her acting than that she took the greatest possible care of her enormous hoop as she sidled into the flames of Carthage.

Brydone endeavours to excuse her apparent caprice and supineness on grounds which are to a certain degree tenable. He alleged that she really was not always able to sing, and that it was not an invariable rule that *caprice* alone prevented her gratifying her audience. "And this, indeed," says Brydone, "I can

readily believe; for that wonderful flexibility of voice that runs with such rapidity and neatness through the most minute divisions, and produces almost instantaneously so great a variety of modulation, must surely depend on the very nicest tones of the fibres; and if these are in the smallest degree relaxed, or their elasticity diminished, how is it possible that their contractions and expansions can so readily obey the will as to produce these effects? The opening of the glottis which forms the voice is so extremely small, and in every variety of tone its diameter must suffer a sensible change; for the same diameter must ever produce the same tone. So *wonderfully* minute are its contractions and dilatations, that Dr. Kiel, I think, computed that in some voices its opening, not more than the tenth of an inch, is divided into upwards of 1,200 parts, the different sound of every one of which is perceptible to the exact ear. Now, what a nice tension of fibres must this require! I should imagine even the most minute change in the air causes a sensible difference, and that in our foggy climate fibres would be in danger of losing this wonderful sensibility, or, at least, that they would very often be put out of tune. It is not the same case with an ordinary voice, where the variety of divisions run through and the volubility with which they are executed bear no proportion to that of a Gabrielli."

Hurt by the slight appreciation of her talents in

England, by that want of consideration which made an unfeeling public grumble whenever she chose to sing badly, or not to sing at all, and by the imperturbability of audiences who met coolness and impudence with disdain and indignation, Gabrielli quitted this country after a very brief stay. She was replaced by a singer named Anna Pozzi, a fine, handsome girl, with a brilliantly clear voice, but who was so unformed, both as a singer and an actress, that she totally failed. Miss Cecilia Davies then ascended the vacant lyric throne.

Gabrielli withdrew, in 1777, to Rome, where she renewed a favourable impression, notwithstanding her age; for she was now bordering on fifty. In 1779 she was at Naples; and in 1780 she went to Milan, where she sang with Marchesi. In the same year she retired with her sister Francesca to Rome, where she led a very regular life, giving concerts frequently, though she sang rarely. The Roman noblesse of both sexes held her in high esteem, and visited her constantly. At this time, by her reckless prodigality, she had considerably reduced her income, having now but 20,000 francs a year; a sum far from adequate to her expenditure. She had lived and travelled with a splendour more suited to a royal princess than an artiste who had to exist by her own exertions, always having many domestics in her suite and a courier who preceded her; and at home, as at the theatre, she

maintained the state of a queen. One day a Florentine nobleman came to pay her a visit, and by some accident one of his fine lace ruffles caught in a pin which fastened some portion of the Gabrielli's dress and was torn; Gabrielli, to make amends for an accident of which she was partially the cause, sent him, the next day, six bottles of Spanish wine, and in place of corks she had them stopped with pieces of the most costly Flanders lace. However, despite her extravagance, Gabrielli had a good heart; she gave largely in charity, and never forgot her parents; she also defrayed the expenses of her brother's education, though unhappily he profited little by the trouble taken with him. He attempted at one time to come out at the Teatro Argentina as a tenor, but his effort was remarkable only for its non-success; he had scarcely got through five bars of his first song when the audience began to hiss and hoot him: and very deservedly, for his singing was as execrable as his sister Gabrielli's was faultless. Cries arose of "'Get away, you raven!" The signor stepped forward, with the family sang-froid, and, addressing the audience, said, "You fancy you are mortifying me by hooting me; you are grossly deceived: on the contrary, I applaud your judgment, for I solemnly declare to you that I never appear on any stage without receiving the same treatment, and sometimes much worse!" An explosion of laughter followed this oration, but it

did not procure a second appearance for the poor fellow.

Having by degrees lost both voice and beauty, Gabrielli retired finally in 1780 to Bologna, where she died in April, 1796, at the age of sixty-six.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOPHIE ARNOULD.

In the Rue de Béthisy, Paris, stands one of those tall, old-fashioned houses, so familiar to the readers of Balzac and Dumas. It was originally the Hôtel Ponthieu, and belonged to Admiral Coligny; but in the middle of the last century it fell into the hands of a man named Arnould, who converted it into an *hôtel garni*, under the designation of the Hôtel de Chatillon.

In the very room where the unfortunate admiral was murdered, there was born, the 14th February, 1744, a child who, some few years later, became the boast of the operatic stage in France. The child was christened Anne Madeleine. M. and Madame Arnould had three boys and one other girl, but Anne was so pretty, and had such a lovely voice and pungent wit, that they resolved to train her with especial care, and she had masters for music and dancing. Anne was fully conscious of the value of her own gifts. "We shall be as rich as princes," the pert puss would say, exultingly. "A good fairy has given me a talisman

to transform everything into gold and diamonds at the sound of my voice."

Accident brought her talent to light. It was then the fashion for ladies, after confessing their sins in Passion-week, to retire for some days to a religious house, there to expiate by fasting the faults and misdemeanors committed during the gaieties of the Carnival. It chanced that when Anne was about twelve years old, the Princess de Modena retired to the convent of Val-de-Grace, and in attending vespers heard one voice which, for power and purity, she thought had never been surpassed. Fine voices were at a premium then in France; and the princess at once decided that she had discovered a treasure. She inquired who was the owner of this exquisite organ, and was informed that it was little Anne Arnould. The princess sent for the child, who came readily, and was not in the least abashed by the presence of the great lady, but sang like a nightingale, and chattered like a magpie. The princess, delighted with her beauty, and her quick audacious wit, clasped a valuable necklace round her white throat. "Come, my lovely child," she said, as she dismissed her, "you sing like an angel, and you have more wit than an angel. Your fortune is made."

On returning to Court, the Princess de Modena could speak of nothing but the little warbler; she ran into the most rapturous praises of her voice, her wit, her

beauty. She told M. de Fondpertuis, the intendant of the royal chapel, of the prize she had discovered; he immediately went to see Madame Arnould, and then went to hear the child sing at the convent. The result of these two visits was that Anne was sent for to sing at the King's chapel. Her mother, being pious and domestic in her tastes, was startled at the idea of trusting her young daughter within the limits of the dissipated circle which formed the Court, and objected to the proposition; but her just prejudices were very soon overruled. The beautiful Pompadour heard Anne sing at the chapel. "Ah!" said she, sentimentally, "with such a talent she might become a princess." This remark decided the future fate of Anne, being equivalent to an order for the début of the pretty vocalist.

Louis Francœur, director of music at the Opera, was anxious that the young nightingale should appear at his theatre. "Every heart in France would beat at her divine voice," he said. Anne, child as she was, knew the dangers of the path which she was invited to enter. "To go to the Opera," said she, shrugging her pretty shoulders, "is to go to the devil; but what matter? It is my destiny." Poor Madame Arnould shuddered; then scolded. "It is not for the Opera, but for the convent that you are destined," she would say, angrily. And then she shut her up in her room. The King settled the matter by signing the paper which carried

the child—she was only thirteen—to the Opera. Madame Arnould dared not oppose the royal authority.

Anne was placed with the famous *tragedienne* Mdlle. Clairon, to learn acting, while the prima donna Mdlle. Fel was engaged to teach her singing; the consequence of this arrangement was, that she became a superb actress, and but an indifferent singer. Anne now discarded her own name for the softer one of Sophie; though she always continued to celebrate her fête-day on that of St. Anne. She first appeared at the Opera, December 15th, 1757. She acted well, and sang very nicely; her beauty carried the audience by storm, and though in reality she had scarcely any voice at all, people imagined that such singing had never been heard before. She looked most captivating, dressed in a lilac robe embroidered with silver; which seems to have been the chief thing the critics thought of, as they omitted to say in what piece she appeared.

A fortnight after her début, her name was in everybody's mouth. Her genius, her beauty, her power, her magnificent eyes, her incomparable grace, her bewitching vivacity, were rapturously descanted on. She had, in truth, much expression, energy, dramatic intelligence, and great majesty of demeanour; while her faults were those of the detestable school in which she was trained. The Opera was besieged whenever her name was announced. "I doubt," said Freron,

speaking of the crowds which waited patiently for the chance of hearing the lovely débutante, "I doubt if they would take so much trouble to get into paradise." All the gentlemen of the time contested for the honour of throwing bouquets at her feet; and she passed on to the stage with as much nonchalance as if she had been for twenty years Queen of the Opera.

Poor Madame Arnould was obliged to content herself with accompanying her daughter behind the scenes, and frowning on the young roués who fluttered round the new star; for once received at the Opera, a girl could no longer be claimed by father or mother. Sophie walked on roses. "Yes," said Madame Arnould, bitterly, to her child's admirers, "but do not strew thorns in her path." It became a matter for jesting and betting as to who should be the first to fix the attention of the brilliant young actress. Among her most frantic adorers was a young nobleman named Lauraguais, a handsome, dashing young fellow, full of wit and daring, and a great favourite with the ladies; he had already almost run through a superb fortune, and could write plays of no great merit. He was a member of the Académie des Sciences, and enjoyed lounging in fashionable saloons and behind the scenes at the Opera. Lauraguais had the temerity to attempt to carry off the young beauty, but the enterprise failing, he had recourse to another expedient. One evening, supping with some friends, the con-

versation turned naturally on the star which had just risen, and much cruel laughter was indulged in at the expense of the fond mother. The count laughed, and filling his glass, offered to bet that before fifteen days were out, Madame Arnould would no longer attend her daughter to the Opera; the wager was laid amid much merriment and jingling of glasses. The next day a distinguished-looking young man, with graceful manners and an air of modesty, presented himself at the Hôtel de Chatillon, where he engaged a room, and being fluent in conversation and apparently a stranger in Paris, soon became acquainted with his landlady. He said his name was Dorval, and that he had just come up from the country to try if the managers would accept a tragedy which he had written. He had an insidious tongue, and Madame Arnould was not entirely free from the feminine tendency to like compliments, and he began to make love to Sophie before her mother's eyes.

Sophie's imagination had taken a romantic turn from reading the history of Madame de Montbazon and the Chevalier de Rancé, which she had studied till she knew it by heart: indeed, many of her best *bons mots* were taken from that edifying work. She was accustomed to the open adulations of the young fops who crowded round her at the Opera, yet she listened with a singular pleasure to the tender flatteries of the young provincial poet. The little drama

of intrigue had a sad finale; for one fine frosty evening the young singer and the poet from the provinces disappeared. The count won his wager. Madame Arnould no longer accompanied her daughter to the Opera.

Sophie, finding herself at liberty, began to give the rein to her extravagant fancy. Her house, the Hôtel Rambouillet, was like a fairy palace. She shone at the Opera by her grace, her talent, her beauty; and in the "green-room" of the Opera she was surrounded by the grand seigneurs, ministers, diplomats, soldiers, poets, artists, rich financiers—all the men of wit and wealth who thronged thither. She could readily maintain a running fire of sarcasms with the pungent Helvetius, exchange canons of taste with the elegant and musical Duc de Nivernais, and bandy jests with Panard, most facetious of vaudevillistes. At home her wit drew round her the first men of the day: she held a little court, of which she was the reigning sovereign, and her salon, which was a museum of elegant and curious things, was always crowded by men of the highest distinction.

There might be seen D'Alembert, the learned and scholarly, rough and independent in manner, who deserted the drawing-rooms of the great for saloons where he could move at his ease. There, also, Diderot would often delight his circle of admirers by the fluency and richness of his conversation, his friends extolling

his disinterestedness and honesty, his enemies whispering about his cunning and selfishness. The novelist Duclos, with his keen power of penetrating human character, would move leisurely through the throng, picking up material for his romances; and Mably would talk politics and drop ill-natured remarks. The learned metaphysician Helvetius, too, was often there, seeking for compliments, his appetite for applause being voracious: so insatiable, indeed, that he even danced one night at the Opera. It was said that he was led to study mathematics by seeing a circle of beautiful ladies surrounding the ugly geometrician Maupertuis in the gardens of the Tuileries. Dorat, who wasted his time in writing bad tragedies, and his property in publishing them; the gay, good-hearted Marmontel; Bernard—called by Voltaire *le gentil*—who wrote the libretto of *Castor et Pollux*, esteemed for years a masterpiece of lyric poetry; Rameau, the popular composer, in whose pieces Sophie always appeared, and Francœur, the leader of the orchestra—were also among her guests. J. J. Rousseau was the great lion, courted and petted by all,. When Benjamin Franklin arrived in Paris, where he was received with unbounded hospitality by the most distinguished of French society, he confessed that nowhere did he find such pleasure, such wit, such brilliancy, as in the salon of Mdlle. Arnould. M. André de Murville was one of the more noteworthy men of wit who attended her soirées, and he became so madly

in love with her that he offered her his hand; but she cared very little about him. One day he told her that if he were not in the Académie within thirty years he would blow out his brains. She looked steadily at him, and then smiling sarcastically, said, "I thought you had done that long ago."

Poets sang her praises; painters eagerly desired to transfer her exquisite lineaments to canvas. All this flattery intoxicated her. She wished to be classed with Ninon, Lais, and Aspasia, and did not disguise the delight she felt at being immortalized in the verses of Dorat, Bernard, Rhulières, Marmontel, and Favart. She was very good-natured, yet sometimes almost spiteful if an occasion for a jest presented itself. Seeing Bernard one day buried in reflection, "What are you thinking of?" she playfully asked. "I was talking to myself," replied he. "Take care," she said, with a warning look, "you gossip with a flatterer." Another day she met a doctor of her acquaintance with a gun under his arm, on his way to see a patient. "Ah! doctor," she said, "you are afraid of your ordinary resources failing." Her repartees were in every mouth, from Paris to Versailles; though it is true that many of the piquant jests of the demoiselles Carton, Clairon, and others were often attributed to her, and collections of her smart sayings were published.

The Comte de Lauraguais remained always passionately attached to her; but he wearied his beloved

Sophie by his furious outbursts of jealousy. She took no pains to avoid giving him occasion for his fits of passion, yet that did not make her feel them less acutely, and he, in turn, annoyed her by his gallantries. He fell in love with Mdlle. Robbe, one of the members of the operatic corps, and Sophie resolved to give him a quiet hint that she knew and disapproved of his passion for this pretty fair one. One day she contrived that he should discover her *tête-a-tête* with a Knight of Malta, when he broke into a storm of reproaches. "You are unjust," retorted Sophie. "This gentleman is only fulfilling his vow as Knight of Malta in making war upon an infidel *(infidèle)*." Still, she loved him tenderly, and for four years remained faithful to him; till at last, tired of his constantly recurring fits of jealousy, she only waited an opportunity of getting rid of him.

The count was about to visit Geneva, to consult Voltaire on a tragedy, entitled *Electre*, which he had written; Sophie ordered her carriage to the door, and had it filled with the *écrins*, laces, and other superb gifts which the count had lavished on her, and she had her two children packed in with the rest of the property. The carriage, with its contents, was driven to the Hôtel de Lauraguais. The countess, who received the message, her husband being from home, accepted the charge of the children, but sent back the carriage, jewellery, and laces.

Being rather frightened at the idea of the scenes which must ensue when the count should return, Sophie entreated the protection of the Comte de Florentin. Lauraguais was thrown into a state of the deepest misery by her unkind treatment; but being at last somewhat calmed, he asked her to grant him a farewell interview, in order that they might come to some amicable arrangement. She received him very civilly, and he behaved discreetly, as he had promised, and proposed to bestow on her for life a pension of 2,000 crowns. Sophie declined to receive anything from him; but the countess interposed, Griselda-fashion, begging her not to refuse what *she* desired; adding that Sophie need be under no uneasiness regarding the children, as she would take as much care of them as if they were her own. Sophie could not refuse an offer so generously urged, and sent M. Bertin (of the Académie des Belles Lettres) to arrange with M. de Lauraguais.

She appeared in all Rameau's operas, and acquitted herself to the ever-increasing delight of her audience.

Her most popular character for a long time was Iphise, in *Dardanus*, "created" by Mdlle. Pelissier, in 1739. She performed to the satisfaction even of Rameau, who thought a good deal of himself. He was vain of his facility in adapting words in music, and boasted that he would set a Dutch gazette if it was required of him.

Sophie Arnould always gave her wit full play, sparing no one, utterly careless of the feelings of others, and never losing a jest even for the sake of decorum. One evening, in 1766, she was present at a representation of La Mierre's tragedy of *Guillaume Tell*, and observing that the actors outnumbered the audience, she turned to some one who accompanied her, and said, "They say usually 'no penny no paternoster,' but here they give a great deal of paternoster and there are no pence at all." Some one showing her a snuff-box, on which were painted the portraits of Sully and the Duc de Choiseul, she smiled wickedly, and said "Debit and credit." Seeing an actress who was very thin, she remarked, "Il n'est pas nécessaire d'aller à Saint Cloud pour voir jouer les eaux (les os)." Hearing one day that a capuchin had been devoured by wolves: "Poor beasts," said Sophie, compassionately, "hunger must be a dreadful thing." A lady, who was equally remarkable for her beauty and her silliness, complaining to her of the annoyances to which she was subjected by the persistency of her lovers, Sophie told her she knew a way by which she could easily rid herself of their importunities. The lady besought her to mention it. "You have only to open your mouth and speak," was the reply. The ballet "Des Diables" for some time went all wrong in *Castor et Pollux*, the performers dancing *tout de travers*. Sophie said that they were so

troubled by the arrival of M. le Duc de la Vauguyon that their heads were completely turned. A coxcomb, wishing to annoy her, said one day—"Oh, now-a-days wit runs in the streets." "Perhaps some of the fools will try to run after it," she answered.

In November, 1769, Sophie's want of respect for Madame du Barry at Fontainebleau, drew on her the serious displeasure of the King, who ordered that she should be imprisoned for six months at l'Hôpital. Fortunately, this order was given merely to end the squabble, and to frighten her; but her comrades took advantage of it to torment her, and whenever she appeared among them they would laugh significantly, and utter the word "l'Hôpital." At last she was so enraged, that she flung up her engagement in a huff, and retired with a pension of 2,000 francs and a splendid fortune. Two or three occurrences at this time made her quit the theatre in disgust. Some people, the moment she was under a cloud, pretended to discover that she had no voice, and that she had literally nothing but her beauty and good acting to recommend her. The Abbé Galiani being present one day at one of the Court performances, and every one round him exclaiming in ecstasies on the voice of Mdlle. Arnould, they eagerly asked his opinion. He shrugged his shoulders, and said—"It is the finest asthma I ever heard."

But she could not long stay away from the stage;

so she returned with almost as much precipitation as she had left.

When Glück was brought to Paris by the then dauphiness, the unfortunate Marie Antoinette, who had been his pupil and patroness when she was an Austrian archduchess, Sophie Arnould had the great honour of appearing in the characters of the heroines of his operas, *Iphigénie en Aulide*, *Orphée*, and *Alceste;* and she acquitted herself to the satisfaction not only of the public, but of the great composer himself. This, at first, seems strange, when her very moderate vocal powers are considered; but Glück's music is easy of execution, while it is pre-eminently dramatic, and Sophie Arnould's talents as an actress made up in these, as in all her other performances, for her deficiencies as a singer. But when Glück's *Armide* was produced, in 1778, the principal character was given to Sophie's rival, Mdlle. Levasseur. Sophie, incensed beyond expression, at once quitted the theatre. She was not regretted, for her sarcasms and spiteful epigrams had raised enemies among her former comrades; nor was she missed by the public, who had latterly hissed her frequently when she appeared on the stage.

For a time she lived in a lodging which overlooked the gardens of the Palais Royal. She was full of freaks as ever, and still maintained her old hospitality. Some of her jokes were really silly enough. One

evening, in 1780, she gave a grand supper, to which, among others, she invited M. Barthe, author of *Les Fausses Infidélités*, and many similar pieces. He was inflated with vanity, though he was totally ignorant of everything away from the theatre; and was, in fact, one of those individuals who actually seem to court mystifications and practical jokes. Mdlle. Arnould instructed her servant, Jeannot, and had him announced pompously under the title of the Chevalier de Médicis, giving M. Barthe to understand that the young man was an illegitimate son of the house of De Médicis. The pretended nobleman appeared to be treated with respect and distinction by the company, and he spoke to the poet with much affability, professing much admiration for his works. M. Barthe was enchanted. He was in a flutter of gratified vanity, and, to show his delight at the condescension of the chevalier, he proposed to write an epic poem in honour of his house. This farce lasted during the evening. The assembled company were in convulsions of suppressed laughter, which broke out when, at the moment of M. Barthe's most ecstatic admiration and respect for his new patron, Sophie Arnould lifted her glass, and, looking at the chevalier, said, in a clear voice, "Your health, Jeannot!" The sensations of poor M. Barthe may readily be imagined. The incident became the story of the day in all circles, and the unlucky poet could not

go anywhere for fear of being tormented about "Jeannot."

The shadow of remorse for her past dissipated life never crossed the mind of Sophie Arnould; on the contrary, she often amused by recalling the scenes of her varied career. One day Voltaire said to her: "Ah, mademoiselle, I am eighty-four years old, and I have committed eighty-four follies (*sottises*)." "A mere trifle," responded Sophie. "I am not yet forty, and I have committed more than a thousand."

At length she withdrew completely from the world, its pleasures, its cares, and its passions. She lived very quietly, but did not escape, even in her solitude, the criticisms of the world, which paid her back her audacity with interest. In the evenings she would amuse herself by singing her favourite airs, and often the passers-by would pause to listen. One night she was singing the air of *Iphigénie*—"Adieu, conservez dans votre ame," when suddenly a stentorian voice, issuing from the crowd of idlers, thundered in a lugubrious tone, this phrase of *Alceste*, "Caron t'appelle, entends sa voix!"

In 1789, she was forced to sell her pretty villa at Port; which was bought by a musician named Baneux to give *fêtes champêtres*. She purchased, in 1792, the presbytère of Clignancourt, Luzarches (Seine-et-Oise), which had belonged to a community of monks of the Order of St. Francis. This abode she decorated prettily,

and jestingly inscribed over the door, "Ite, missa est." She had some idea of living altogether in retirement and devotion, and burying herself in the country, to enjoy the tranquil delights of a rustic life; but she met with a priest, who terrified her, and she changed her mind. "He lost the chance of making a good conversion," she would say, when in a melancholy mood. She remained perfectly undisturbed for a long time amid the storms of the Revolution. Once, however, she was alarmed by a visit from the *sans culottes*: a deputation waiting on her to know whether she was a good citizen, she received them politely, and assured them that she admired the Republic above all things. They were somewhat dissatisfied, however, fancying that she was not sincere, and were about to take her to prison to have her opinions more rigidly examined into, when one of them perceived on a console a bust in marble. It was Sophie, in the character of Iphigenia. The man, deceived, perhaps, by a similarity of feature or expression, or by the scarf—for there could scarcely have been any nearer resemblance between the piquant Sophie and the coarse, brutal-looking Republican, imagined that it was the bust of Marat, and drew the attention of his comrades to the supposed effigy of their adored hero. "She is a good citoyenne after all," exclaimed he, as he saluted the marble. And they bowed themselves out, convinced that Sophie was a staunch supporter of the tricolor.

She had then 30,000 livres a year, and friends without number. Alas, for the mutability of human things! In less than two years she had lost her fortune, and her friends, dispersed by exile, imprisonment, and the scaffold, had vanished like the morning mist. She hastened to Paris with the wreck of her property; and a lawyer who took charge of her affairs, completed her ruin: she was now reduced to the lowest stage of poverty.

The Count de Lauraguais was still in good circumstances, but Sophie did not solicit aid from her old lover. After a few days, a thought struck her. In her brilliant days, Fouché had loved her. He was now a great man, a minister, and able to afford her help if he would. One morning in 1798, a message was brought to Fouché, that a woman demanded an audience, to confide to him something of importance. She was admitted, and he recognized Sophie Arnould. He listened to her recital with emotion, and deciding that the woman who had for twenty years laboured to entertain the public was entitled to some recompense, he signed an order for a pension of 2,400 livres, and ordered that apartments should be given her in the Hôtel d' Angevilliers. And now Sophie Arnould, who the day before had not a friend in the world, saw crowding round her all the poets, artists, fashionable loungers, and philosophers of the time. The charms of her conversation and her vivacity made them forget

the ravages of time; she was once more the Sophie Arnould of the old golden days.

In 1803, she passed away, obscure, unnoticed. With her also passed away, their departure likewise scarcely recorded, two of the most eminent actresses of the French stage—Sophie's instructor, Clairon, and Sophie's rival, Mdlle. de Beaumesnil.

CHAPTER IX.

ANTOINETTE CÈCILE CLAVEL ST. HUBERTY.

ANTOINETTE CÉCILE CLAVEL, born at Toulouse, about 1756, was the daughter of a brave old soldier, who was a musician, and répétiteur to a French operatic troupe in the service of the Elector Palatine.

At Manheim, in 1770, M. Clavel, with the troupe to which he belonged, was engaged for the theatre of Warsaw. He took his daughter with him, and the French composer, Lemoyne, who was chef-d'orchestre to the company, gave lessons to the young girl during the four years they stayed in that city, ultimately bringing her out in an opera of his composition entitled *Le Bouquet de Colette.*

From Warsaw the young candidate for operatic honours went to Berlin, where she married, it is said, a certain Chevalier de Croisy. After her marriage she was engaged at the theatre of Strasbourg, and sang there during three years under the name of Mdlle. Clavel. She was now beginning to be known, and at last obtained an opportunity of going to Paris, where she appeared,

September 23, 1777, at the Académie Royal de Musique, in the little rôle of Mélisse, in Glück's *Armida*. She was at first hardly noticed, and was unable to obtain any but minor characters. Her salary was a mere pittance, and as it was all she had to support herself upon, she occupied a garret in the Rue du Mail; her furniture consisting of a small bed and a trunk, which also served for chair. She attended rehearsal every day dressed in a shabby, scanty black gown, and was obliged to bear without a murmur the sneers of her companions, who flaunted about her in silks, laces, and jewellery: they nicknamed her Madame la Ressource, from the comedy of *Le Joueur*, by Regnard, and were pitiless in their ridicule.

In person she was small, thin, and fair; her features were not finely formed, and her mouth was of unusual size; but her countenance was expressive. She had no striking qualities whatever, and a hard German accent vitiated her pronunciation; while extreme nervousness marred the effect of her acting.

Despite her faults, Glück, kind and discriminating, perceiving that she had fervour and talent which only needed careful culture, took a lively interest in the lonely girl, and not only defended her against the sarcasm of her comrades, but set himself to work to develop her gifts. Hearing her called *Madame la Ressource*, "Yes," he said, "the name is well be-

stowed, for this girl will some day be truly the resource of the Opera."

The efforts of poor Antoinette to correct her faults were unceasing, and justified the judgment of the great master; and at last she reaped the benefit of her labour. The approaching retirement of Sophie Arnould and of Mdlle. de Beaumesnil, gave her an opportunity of being heard in an important part, and on May 12, 1778, she appeared as Angélique, in Piccini's *Roland*, with Moreau. It was her first success. The following July she appeared in *Iphigénie en Aulide*, with Mdlle. Duranci, Larrivée, and Legros; but in this she almost failed through excessive timidity.

In nowise discouraged, Antoinette still persevered, and in 1780 she gained a triumph in Grétry's new opera of *Le Seigneur Bienfaisant*. Her accents were so pathetic in a scena expressive of anguish and despair, that the theatre resounded with plaudits, and the spectators almost forgot that it was but a mimicry of human emotion. So energetically did she render this scena, that at last she seriously injured her health, and was obliged to repose for some weeks.

Her next triumph was Eglé, in *Thésée*, by Gossec, produced March 1, 1782, in which she was seconded by Larrivée, Legros, and Mdlle. Duplant. Her greatest achievement was in the *Ariane*, of Edelmann. Never had the expression of tenderness and passion been so exquisitely delineated on the French stage. In

October she appeared, with Legros and Larrivée, in *Iphigénie en Tauride*, which was successfully revived; and on November 26, she proved, by her performance of Rosette, in Grétry's *L'Embarras des Richesses*, that she had as much piquancy and delicacy in her talent as she had energy and sensibility.

Her conquest of the public was completed when she replaced Rosalie Levasseur as Armide in Sacchini's *Rinaldo*, in 1783. She excited transports of enthusiasm. Marmontel, the Abbé Arnaud, Ginguené, Morellet, united in saying that she caused all her predecessors to be forgotten. In expression of feeling she rose almost to the sublime, and her countenance was irradiated with fire and passion. The poor little girl who, clad in her worn black gown, had plodded patiently backwards and forwards from her squalid garret, and who had laboured so perseveringly and waited so unmurmuringly, was now Queen of the Opera; and the death of Mdlle. Laguerre, at the commencement of 1783, and, a short time after, the retirement of Mdlle. Levasseur, left her in undisputed possession of the sovereignty of the lyric stage.

Her voice, acting, pronunciation, and enunciation, were now irreproachable. She pronounced in a manner which appeared exaggerated, at a time when it was the fashion for singers to regard the words as unnecessary appendages to the music; but, as she herself said, she did so to make them comprehended in every corner of the house.

In 1783, a new grand opera for the spectacles at Fontainebleau was demanded of each of the rival composers, Piccini and Sacchini. Sacchini's opera of *Chimène*, in which Madame St. Huberty (as she always designated herself) performed, was represented first, and once only, before the Court. Marmontel was writing the libretto of *Didon* for Piccini, and invited the composer to his country-house, and when the work was finished, Madame St. Huberty, who was to perform the Queen of Carthage, came to dine at Marmontel's house. She was delighted with the part, and sang it throughout from the score; "and she expressed it so well," says the poet, "that I imagined myself at the theatre."

During the rehearsals the critics prophesied no brilliant fate for the opera; but Piccini said, "Gentlemen, do not judge *Didon* until she arrives." And he was right, for at the appearance of Madame St. Huberty his opera was received with delight and admiration at Fontainebleau. Louis XVI., who did not care much for opera, had it performed twice: he was reconciled to this style of opera by the acting of St. Huberty, to whom he gave a pension of 1,500 livres, adding one of five hundred more from his privy purse. When it was produced at Paris, December 1st, 1783, *Didon* had an extraordinary success, and was acknowledged to be Piccini's masterpiece.

As Didon, Madame St. Huberty surpassed herself. "Never," says Grimm, "has there been united acting more captivating, a sensibility more perfect, singing more exquisite, happier byplay, and more noble *abandon*." She was crowned on the stage: an honour hitherto unknown, and since so much abused. The secret of her marvellous gift lay in her extreme sensibility. Others might sing an air better, but no one could give to either airs or recitatives accentuation more true, or more impassioned, action more dramatic, and byplay more eloquent. Some one complimenting her on the vivid truth with which she embodied her part—"I really experience it," she said. "In a death-scene, I actually feel as if I were dead."

Piccini next produced *Le Faux Lord* at the Comédie Italienne. In this Madame St. Huberty, who was now in the first rank of vocalists in lyric tragedy, excited frantic enthusiasm whenever she appeared. On one occasion the audience rose with one impulse, and cried "Vive Didon! Vive la reine de Carthage!" "Ariane abandonnée" was another part in which Madame St. Huberty excelled; and as Colette, in the *Devin du Village*, she appeared a simple country girl.

It has been said that Talma was the first who discarded the old absurd costumes of the theatre; but it was in reality Madame St. Huberty who effected the revolution. She studied the Greek and Roman statues, and wore robes in keeping with the antique

characters which she assumed, and thus speedily suppressed hoops and powder. In arranging her costume for Didon, she had a design expressly sent from Rome. Yet still a costume of white satin, with red bordering for the Romans, a buff-coat, with cuirass and helmet for the cavaliers, a Spanish habit, and a ridiculous Turkish suit, constituted the wardrobes for tragedies; while Cupid was attired in stockings and breeches of rose-coloured taffeta, with jewelled garters and black shoes embroidered in spangles.

Madame St. Huberty also appeared in Hypermnestra, in *Les Danaïades*, an opera by Salieri, which was produced by Glück under his name to ensure its success. And, in 1785, she appeared in Grétry's *Panurge*, with Lays. On the retirement of Mdlle. Duplant, Madame St. Huberty was persuaded to essay, in April, 1785, the character of Clytemnestre, in *Iphigénie en Aulide;* but from want of strength of voice, this performance was a failure.

On Madame St. Huberty visiting Marseilles in this year, the most distinguished ladies of the city formed her escort, accompanying her to the pavilion of Marseilles in a gondola, which was surrounded with two hundred little boats, crowded with persons of all classes, and she was saluted with a salvo of artillery as if she were a veritable sovereign. The Greek ladies at Marseilles presented her with a rich modern Greek costume, which she wore at her fête, August 15. This

fête was most splendid. The popular cantatrice having arrived by sea in a very beautiful gondola, disembarked amidst thunders of artillery and the acclamations of the people. She then re-embarked for the purpose of witnessing a water tournament. On leaving the gondola, the people danced round her with tambourines, and conducted her to an illuminated pavilion at a neighbouring villa. In a tent was arranged a little théâtre champêtre, where was played a little allegorical piece, composed in honour of this divinity of the Opera by a Provençal poet. During the ball which followed, Madame St. Huberty was placed on an estrade between Melpomene and Polymnie, the two muses of the piece. Then there were illuminations, and a magnificent supper. At the close of the repast some couplets were sung in her honour, to which she replied in some couplets in the Provençal patois. On quitting Provence, she bore away with her in the imperiale of her carriage more than a hundred coronets, many of which were of great value.

In 1790 Madame St. Huberty sent in her resignation to the Opera, when she was complimented by a superb *fête d'adieux* on her retirement from the stage. On December 29 of that year she married the Count d'Entraigues, with whom she had been intimate for some time previous; but their union was kept secret for seven years. The count had served in the French army, and was one of the orators of

the Constitutional Assembly; he was subsequently appointed Secretary of the French Embassy to Spain, and after the Peace was attached to the Embassy to Russia. On leaving for Vienna he was arrested at Trieste, his papers seized, and himself thrown into the citadel of Milan, on a charge of connivance with Pichegru in the affair of Moreau. His wife managed to procure his escape, and he then announced his marriage with her. For this act of devotion, and for saving a portfolio of important papers, Louis XVIII. bestowed on Madame d'Entraigues the Order of St. Michel.

Count d'Entraigues afterwards entered the political service of Russia; he was entrusted with secret missions, and derived great emoluments from carrying to St. Petersburg the secret articles of the peace of Tilsit, copies of which he also sold to the English Ministry of which Canning was premier. The count and countess then settled in England and resided at Barnes. But their life of retirement was soon cut short by the poniard of an assassin. The count's valet, a Piedmontese named Lorenzo, had been bribed by a Venetian refugee or a Swiss, an agent of Fouché, to betray his master and purloin certain papers. On the morning of the 22nd July, 1812, as the count was descending the staircase, Lorenzo, who had ascertained that his treachery was discovered, stabbed his master twice with a dagger, and ran upstairs for a pistol to finish

the bloody deed. Meeting the countess, and fearing detection, he stabbed her also, and then attempted to blow out his brains. Both the victims and their murderer died, and the envelopes of the papers he had stolen were found in the trunk of the assassin. Some years after the wretch who suborned Lorenzo committed suicide by throwing himself from a window.

CHAPTER X.

GERTRUDE ELIZABETH MARA.

GERTRUDE ELIZABETH MARA was the daughter of Johann Schmäling, a respectable musician in Hesse Cassel. She was born February 23, 1749. Soon after her birth, she lost her mother; but her father, out of his very limited means and scanty leisure, tried to rear her as best he could.

It is easy to picture the little German girl in the home of her childhood, trying to amuse herself during papa's daily absences. Sometimes, as she sits shut up in her solitary apartment, debarred from all juvenile sports, she will watch the vibrating pendulum of the old French clock, and beat time to its motion with her head and hand. Then a noise in the street attracts her attention, and flying to the window, she mounts a stool, and on tiptoe peers on the outer world,—that is to say, on as much as is visible in the dull German strasse—and perceives an itinerant guitarist, thrumming to a crowd. She drinks in the sounds rapturously, and beats time on the window-ledge, with

a feeling of delight which is never effaced from her mind.

Unexpectedly, a new pleasure is presented to her, though accompanied by temptation, which perhaps renders it the more delicious. Her father, having picked up from an Italian the art of repairing musical instruments, is often at work mending such instruments as are portable. Gertrude sits on her stool, following his movements with the wondering eyes which belong exclusively to children, observing his busy fingers with lively curiosity. One day papa, having mended a violin, leaves it on his bench, and then goes out, committing the care of the little room to his almost baby daughter. The solitary child approaches the bench, and eyes the violin; then, quaking at her temerity, she touches it. The strings vibrate; her ears tingle with the joy of a novel pleasure. She draws the strings again, and, grown bolder by impunity, indulges in a rather too violent pizzicato movement. O horror! one of the strings snaps, and she can do nothing but sit down and wait tremblingly for her father's return. Of course she gets a smart scolding from the poor hard-worked musician and instrument mender, and is visited with terrible prophecies of what will befall her if she ventures to touch the violin again. For some days she does not dare approach the bench; but at last, in some more than usually lonely hour, the temptation proves too strong. She begins

pulling the magic strings, and is so absorbed in her amusement that her father is in the middle of the room gazing sternly on her before she is conscious of his entrance. Dropping the instrument, she flies, in her dismay, into a corner, and waits for her father to declare what her punishment shall be.

"So," says he, menacingly, "you have again disobeyed me. Now, as a punishment, I will make you learn to play that instrument."

To his astonishment, the child, instead of beginning to cry or whimper, runs to the fiddle, and seizing it with the ardour of a genuine virtuosa, draws from it tones of the softest and most pleasing kind, as if caressing it. Papa cannot resist this, and with a half smile, quits the field, leaving his daughter mistress of the violin. In a short time, such is her assiduity, she is able to run through the greater part of the scale with ease and correctness; and ere many weeks are out, she is so far proficient that she is, to her pride and delight, able to accompany her father in some easy duets.

The neighbours soon find out that the solitary little girl has proved a musical prodigy. They flock to the room of Herr Schmäling to listen to the child's performance. Then the more respectable inhabitants—the exclusives—send for the youthful genius; and frequently she may be seen carried in her father's arms through the streets, going from one house to another.

Presents are showered upon her, which tend materially to better the circumstances of herself and her father, and as the good Herr has by this means more time to devote to the instruction of his child, the advantage is doubled.

Some friends advised Herr Schmäling to take hi daughter to Frankfort. She was then six years old, and she made a sensation. From thence they proceeded from town to town, till they reached Holland, where, after performing for some time, they were counselled to undertake a journey to England.

Gertrude—or rather Elizabeth, for her first name was generally dropped—was ten years of age when she ventured with her father to London, the city where merit is always rewarded. They were well received, as a novelty of the hour, and had the honour of appearing before the King and the Court. The child was admired and petted; but some of the ladies, with the true British antipathy for female fiddlers, advised her to change the violin for the harpsichord. She agreed—or her father for her—to give up her favourite instrument, and he directed her studies towards singing. Meanwhile, as there were several juvenile performers in London at this time, it was determined to give a concert, combining their several talents; and a fashionable assemblage at the little theatre in the Haymarket one evening witnessed a display of precocious genius. Mdlle. Schmäling and Baron played

on the violin, a Miss B. on the harpsichord, and Cervetto on the violoncello.

As her voice promised to be a very fine one, Herr Schmäling resolved to obtain good instruction for his daughter, and he placed her with an Italian singer of some repute—Paradisi. The cunning signor soon perceived the value of the gem he was required to polish, and artfully endeavoured to enter into a bargain with the worthy German that they should divide all profits for a term of years as an indemnification for his services; Herr Schmäling, however, plainly saw the drift of the Italian's proposition, and quietly declined it. Signor Paradisi, disgusted and enraged, refused to have anything more to do with these obstinate Germans, and the young vocalist's father had to take on himself once more the part of musical instructor.

But fashion is fickle, and soon the clever little German girl went out of vogue. She next appeared in a very different situation. It chanced that Dr. Harrington—famous for his large wig and the favourite duet "How sweet in the woodlands"—was one evening sitting at his window, while he was living at Wells, conversing with some friends who had dined with him, when "a German family" approached, and began a musical performance; the father playing the flute, a woman who accompanied him thrumming the guitar, a girl singing, and a boy carrying round a hat to collect halfpence. The tones of the girl's voice, and her

brilliant execution of a piece of music with which the doctor and his friends were familiar, drew their delighted attention, and the family were desired to come into the hall to repeat their performance. The doctor, becoming interested in the musicians, inquired into their circumstances, when the father, in doleful terms, informed him that his name was Schmäling, that being disappointed of obtaining employment in London, and having no pecuniary resources, he had been obliged to adopt this itinerant course as a means of support. Dr. Harrington could do little for him at Wells, which was not a musical place, but he gave Herr Schmäling letters to some influential people in Bath as an introduction to persons who would patronize a morning concert there. "The girl's voice did not fail to divest the doctor's recommendation of its appearance of enthusiasm. She was heard, wondered at, and talked of. Some amateurs immediately tendered their services to carry the father's project into effect; bills were printed, tickets issued and purchased, and the doctor rode over to superintend in person the musical arrangements." From the proceeds of this concert enough was obtained to enable the poor musicians to return to their native Germany.

On their return to Cassel they were received with delight and warmest welcome by the neighbours who had formerly crowded the room of the worthy Herr Schmäling to hear his clever child. Almost the first

news that the musician heard was that the great Frederick had formed a chapel, and he immediately sought to obtain places for himself and his daughter on the establishment. Unfortunately, Frederick had an invincible prejudice against German musicians, and determined that he would not engage any if he could help himself; he therefore looked coldly on the application of Herr Schmäling. Yet, that he might not appear to act unfairly towards the young artiste, he sent his first singer, Morelli, to a concert which she gave, desiring him to report. Morelli went, listened, and came back. "Ella canta come una Tedesca," said he ("She sings like a German"). Frederick shrugged his shoulders, and did not engage either Elizabeth or her father that time.

After a short stay at Cassel, they went in 1766 to Leipsic, where a concert was organized under the direction of the celebrated Hiller, who desired to introduce the young singer to the notice of the amateurs of that place. Her success was plainly proved by an engagement at the theatre as first singer at a salary of six hundred rix dollars (about eighty pounds); a tolerably good beginning at that period for a débutante. She now turned her attention to the harpsichord with such honest zeal, that in a very little time she had thoroughly mastered its difficulties, and played at several concerts in public.

Elizabeth's personal appearance was far from striking.

She was by no means handsome, being short and insignificant, with a rather agreeable, good-natured countenance, the leading feature of which was—terrible defect in a singer—a set of irregular teeth, which projected in defiance of order, out of their proper places. Her manner, however, was prepossessing; though she was an indifferent actress. But her voice atoned for everything: its compass was from G to E in altissimo, which she ran with the greatest ease and force; the tones being at once powerful and sweet. Both her *portamento di voce* and her volubility were declared to be unrivalled. It was remarked that she seemed to take difficult music from choice, and she could sing fluently at sight: rather a rare accomplishment among vocalists of that day. Nothing taxed her powers. Her execution was easy and neat; her shake was true, open, and liquid; and though she preferred brilliant, effective pieces, her refined taste was well known. "Her voice, clear, sweet, and distinct, was sufficiently powerful," remarked Lord Mount Edgecumbe afterwards, "though rather thin, and its agility and flexibility rendered her a most excellent bravura singer, in which style she was unrivalled." "Mara's divisions," observes another critic, "always seemed to convey a meaning; they were vocal, not instrumental; they had light and shade, and variety of tone."

About a year after Elizabeth had appeared in Leipsic, it was resolved to give a performance at Dresden in

honour of the birthday of the prince. It happened that the Grand Duke of Saxony, in company with the dowager Duchess Maria Antonia, paid a visit to Leipsic on the occasion of the great annual fair, and hearing the young singer at a concert which she gave, they expressed their appreciation of her talents in flattering terms. The dowager duchess desired that the young girl should be invited to perform at Dresden, and she was invited thither accordingly. Inexperienced, and haunted by that indefinable distrust of herself which always pursues real genius, Elizabeth was fluttered at the idea of singing before a royal circle. Maria Antonia was all kindness, and testified an interest in even the costume the young singer was to wear; it was rich and costly, and the gift of the royal lady. The duchess, seeing her timidity and alarm, which amounted to a ludicrous bashfulness, instructed her in the style in which she should walk and otherwise comport herself on the stage, pointing out the attitudes most appropriate to the situations of the piece.

Mdlle. Schmäling returned to Leipsic in the beginning of 1768, laden with presents and "decked out like a queen." Naturally the first inquiries of her friends were what impression she had made at Dresden, as people cross-examine young beauties after a ball as to how many partners they had, and how many conquests they achieved. "Did you succeed?" they asked. "They say so," was her naïve reply, "but I know

nothing about it: I sang as well as I could; and only see how in return they have bedizened me out like a mantua-maker's show-block! This was the way I got on there." "But," they said, "you had some one to instruct you what to do?" "Oh, yes; but then I made many sad blunders. I thought how it would be when they once got me there."

She was strongly advised to visit Italy, but, attached to her own country, and anxious, for some reason, to see Berlin, she coaxed her father to take her there instead. She was now twenty-two: her voice was completely formed, and its flexibility and power of expression excited the admiration of all true judges. It was with confidence that she made her début at Berlin, in 1771, in Hasse's *Piramo e Tisbe*, with the famous Concialini, who gave her some finishing lessons. She achieved a great success; to the astonishment of the flute-playing, grenadier-trapping King, who at first would "hardly deign to hear her," Zelter informed Goethe, his majesty having a special prejudice against the German style. He declared at first that he as soon expected pleasure from the neighing of his horse as from a German singer; but she was invited to Potsdam, and he agreed to hear her.

Indignant at the injustice of being thus condemned solely on account of her nationality, Elizabeth was too angry to feel any awe at the idea of singing before her royal critic. She presented herself with a degree of

confidence which nerved her for any task, and found, sitting close to the pianoforte, a little, crabbed, lean old man, with a slightly stooping figure, attired with Spartan simplicity in an old blue coat with red facings, and a liberal allowance of Spanish snuff on the breast, in whom she soon recognized the King. Beside him lay his battered military cocked hat and his thick cane, which he used as a riding-whip, hitting the horse between the ears. The royal physiognomy was not prepossessing: the thin lips, prominent jaws, snuffy nose, receding brow, and grim expression, did not seem to promise much leniency; and the eyes, of supernatural brilliancy, were fixed steadily on Elizabeth with a most disconcertingly piercing expression. As he said nothing, and made no sign for her to approach, the cantatrice, with a coolness acquired by her trying situation, commenced examining some paintings which hung near her. At length Frederick condescended to beckon to her. She advanced and curtsied.

"So you are going to sing me something?" he said, abruptly.

"As your majesty pleases," was her reply, curt as the inquiry; and she seated herself at the pianoforte without further ceremony.

The King listened with profound attention. He was astonished, but would not admit it. Taking an enormous handful of snuff from his huge box, "Ha! Can you sing at sight?" he asked. And ere she had time

to answer, he picked out the most trying bravura in his collection. "This, to be sure," said he, placing it before her, "is but poor stuff, but when well executed it sounds pretty enough."

She sang it without a single mistake; then sang another; and at last the King was fairly vanquished. He said a thousand flattering things, and dismissed her with a handsome present. After this she was daily, and for several weeks together, invited to Potsdam; and finally the next year she was retained as Court singer, with a salary of 3,000 Prussian dollars—about 450*l.*

Being desirous of perfecting herself in the science of music, she went through a course of thorough bass under the well-known Kirnberger. She might have felt a fear lest his majesty should find her deficient in any particular; for Frederick's enthusiasm for music was only equalled by his love for war and his passion for snuff. His favourite amusement was playing on the flute; and he really was a master of the instrument. His splendid collection of flutes was attended to by a man specially retained to keep them dry or moist as the weather required. These flutes, which were all made by the same manufacturer, cost a hundred ducats each.

Nobody was permitted to attend his majesty's concerts besides the performers and a very few select friends. So fearful was Frederick, however, of being

detected in a false note, that when first trying over some new piece of music, he would shut himself up for hours in his private apartment to practise it; and even then, when beginning it with the accompaniment, he would tremble like an aspen. The King defrayed the entire expenses of the Opera, the performances being always free. At six o'clock in the evening, with military punctuality, his majesty took his place in the pit, close to the orchestra, behind the leader, where he could easily see the score, and so detect the slightest deviation or fault committed by the singers. The orchestra consisted of fifty-one performers (two harpsichord players among the number). The vocalists were, Signora Agricola, wife of the composer, and fifty years of age; Signora Gasparini, a fine antique of seventy-two; Signor Concialini, Signor Porporino, and Elizabeth Schmäling. Charles Concialini, born at Sienna, in 1744, had come from the Court of Bavaria in 1764 to form part of the great Frederick's chapel. The qualities which distinguished him were a beautiful *mise de voix*, great lightness, and, above all, a delicious trill.

Being installed as principal singer at the Court of Prussia, Mdlle. Schmäling, perhaps, found she had more time at her disposal than she knew well what to do with, for in 1773 she fell in love with a handsome violoncellist, named Jean Mara, a native of Berlin, a favourite of Prince Henry, the King's brother. He

was a showy, extravagant man, and made such an impression on her susceptible heart, that she accepted his offer of marriage. The King, knowing the morals and character of his brother's dashing violoncellist, gave his *protégée* some well-meant hints. But love is proverbially blind; and as it was difficult to obtain permission to marry, the lovers absented themselves without leave. They were captured immediately, and Mara was exiled to a regiment at Kastrin, where he was compelled to become a fifer. Probably Vater Fritz thought it would be more judicious and more gracious to give his consent to the alliance; so Mara was permitted to return to Berlin, and the union was solemnized.

In a very short time after her marriage, Elizabeth found that her beloved Jean had a heavy arm and an energetic method of expressing his opinions, especially in such family debates as might be brought forward for discussion after dinner. The King heard of his doings; and being informed on one occasion that he had beaten his wife with such violence that she was unable to appear in the royal presence from a discoloured eye, the indignant monarch (who did not hesitate to break even one of his favourite flutes on the head of a pet hussar in a moment of excitement,) sent for the brute Mara, and telling him that as he was so fond of beating, it would be a pity to debar him full exercise in his amusement, packed him

off to play the part of drummer to one of his regiments for a month.

Accompanied by her husband—whom she was always forgiving—Madame Mara paid a visit in 1777 to her native place, where she was enthusiastically received. A concert was proposed, and so great was the demand for tickets that no building, even the theatre itself, was sufficient to contain the number of applicants. A second concert was almost as fully attended. Between the parts of the programme she was invited into the Grand Duke's box, and received by the potentate with flattering attention: he kissed her on the forehead, and overwhelmed her with praises. After this she sang in a selection of sacred music, given for the benefit of the charitable institutions of the place, in the cathedral church, which was crowded to excess. Of the effect she produced, some idea may be formed from the well-known exclamation of the celebrated preacher, Pfister, when on his death-bed—

"I should die more at ease, could I but once again hear Madame Mara in the temple of the Lord my God!"

In 1779, in consequence of the Bavarian succession, there was no carnival. The same year Madame Mara received an invitation to sing in London. She was offered an enormous sum—it was said 1,600*l.* for three evenings, but that surely must have been a mistake—together with 2,500*l.* to defray her travelling

expenses. It was awkward asking for a *congé*, as the royal Frederick was determined she should not leave his kingdom. She asked, however. The reply was laconic, but significant: "Madame Mara may go, but M. Mara must stay where he is." The great Fritz depended on her passionate love for her husband to keep her. Unluckily for this hypothesis, the handsome brute preferred money even to the society of his fair Elizabeth, and he proved to her by striking arguments that she could easily make the journey under the protection of a female relative. The King, on hearing this, refused to let her go. Poor Madame Mara was so unhappy at the disappointment that she was laid up with a dangerous fever.

On recovering from her attack, she was forbidden by her physicians to sing for some time, and ordered to the baths of Toplitz. The grim Frederick being asked for leave of absence—

"Freyenwalde will do quite as well," said his majesty, in his customary laconic style.

But Elizabeth Mara was a woman, and as obstinate as Queen Anne. She repeated her asseverations that it was indispensable she should recruit her strength by a visit to the Bohemian baths; and finding that her representations made no impression on the obdurate monarch, she determined to neglect her professional duties, in the hope of being dismissed.

It chanced that the Czarovitch, Paul I. of Russia,

paid a visit to the Prussian capital at this juncture, July, 1780, to demand the hand of the Princess of Wirtemberg, and Berlin was in a state of extraordinary excitement. Old Frederick set the example of lavish magnificence, and his loyal subjects followed suit. Those who could afford, and many who could not, expended hundreds of crowns in lace and embroidery; while others who were more prudent either retired to the country, or else confined themselves to their houses. The Opera was in full preparation. At one of the rehearsals, Jean Mara maliciously observed that he believed the composer understood more of soldiery than of music; and as this was not the first sarcasm of the kind he had been imprudent enough to indulge in, he was, by command of the great Frederick, made over to the *corps de garde*, with strict orders to correct him for his insolence. No particular mode of punishment was prescribed, so each soldier inflicted such chastisement as he considered most fitting. They began by rigging him out in an old uniform and a large pair of whiskers, loading him with the heaviest firelock they could find, and forced him to go through the manual exercise for two hours, accompanying their drill with the usual discipline of the cane. They then made him dance and sing for two hours longer, and ended this persecution by compelling the surgeon to take from him a large quantity of blood. In a miserable condition they restored him to his disconsolate wife, who

had been essaying all her arts to persuade the officer on guard to mitigate the poor wretch's punishment.

Madame Mara was announced to appear in one of her great parts in the opera; but now, being bent on effecting her escape, she feigned illness. Her royal patron sent her notice in the morning that she was to get well and sing her best. She immediately grew worse: in short, she was unable to leave her bed. Two hours before the opera commenced, a carriage, escorted by eight soldiers, drew up in front of her house, and the captain of the guard unceremoniously entered her chamber, intimating that he had orders to bring her to the theatre "dead or alive." The ire of madame rose.

"You cannot," she exclaimed, with tears of rage. "You see I am in bed."

"That is of little consequence," imperturbably responded the captain of the guard. "We will take you bed and all."

Madame Mara's eyes flashed fire, but reading determination in every line of the obdurate officer's countenance, she prudently demanded an armistice. "I will go to the theatre," she said, mentally resolving to sing as badly as, with a magnificent voice and irreproachable taste, she could possibly manage. Resolutely she kept to this idea till the curtain was about to descend on the first act, when a thought suddenly seized her. Might she not be ruining herself in giving the Grand

Duke of Russia a bad opinion of her powers? In a bravura she burst forth in all her brilliance and glory, distinguishing herself especially by a marvellous shake, which she executed with such wonderful art as to call down thunders of applause.

Having thus voluntarily abandoned her first line of tactics, she tried another, and resolved to make her escape by means of a large harpsichord which she greatly valued, and which seemed to the King a security for its mistress. Pretending that she desired to have it repaired, she had it removed; but instead of having it brought back to her house, she sent it out of the kingdom, and prepared to follow it. Her husband accompanied her. They intended to reach Vienna by route of Saxony and Bohemia, whence they might make their way to Paris and London. An officer attempted to detain them on the frontier, when Madame Mara quietly drew a letter from her pocket, and held it towards him, declaring that the King had changed his mind. "Here is his permission," she said, with the utmost self-possession, "in which he has given me leave to go." The letter was actually from the great Frederick, but its purport was of a very different nature to what she represented. The officer, knowing her influence at Court, did not venture to do more than glance respectfully at the royal signature, and allowed her to pass without further questioning. They had just gained the gates of Dresden, when they found that the

Prussian chargé d'affaires resided in the city. "No one can conceive my agitation and alarm," said Madame Mara, "when, in one of the first streets we entered, we encountered the said chargé d'affaires, who rode direct up to us. He had been apprised of our arrival; and the chaise was instantly stopped. As to what took place between him and my good man, and how the latter contrived to get out of the scrape, I was totally unconscious. I had fallen into a swoon, from which I did not recover till we had reached our inn." At length they reached the confines of Bohemia, and for the first time supped in freedom and security.

The fugitives reached Vienna in the beginning of March, 1780. Frederick despatched a messenger to the Emperor Joseph, begging him to arrest them. The good, eccentric Joseph was too kind-hearted to do anything of the sort; but he gave the pair a hint that, as there was no resisting the requests of the King of Prussia, their wisest course would be to get away as fast as possible, so that he might inform his royal neighbour that the messenger arrived too late.

When the alarm had subsided, Madame Mara appeared in Vienna. Although so eminent in Berlin, the Viennese had scarcely heard of the Mara, and she made a very slight impression. The Italian singers caballed against her, determined to prevent her from having any access to the art-loving Maria Teresa; but the queen, who liked to know everything about everybody,

sent for her, and was as kind as her son Joseph had been. She treated her with the greatest condescension, and became her warmest patron. Henceforth Mara's success was assured; and, after a stay of nearly two years, she determined on a journey to Paris, taking with her autograph letters of introduction, which her illustrious patroness had written before her death to her daughter, the beautiful Marie Antoinette.

Madame Todi was then in the zenith of her fame, the object of the enthusiastic homage of the Parisians. But Madame Mara sang before the royal family at Versailles, and appeared in public in Paris, and was immediately elected a rival of the Portuguese prima donna; the French dividing into two opposition parties, one for Mara, the other for Todi. It was not long before Mara was honoured with the title of *première cantatrice de la reine*. The queen gave her many testimonies of regard, and was very kind to her. Having a desire to visit Italy, Mara on one occasion mentioned her wish to her majesty. Marie Antoinette listened, and then replied, sadly, "Do not go to Italy. You would expose yourself to danger in so doing, and life is but too precious to us." The prophetic tone in which this was uttered, although there appeared to have been no ground for the queen's fears, struck a chill to the heart of Mara, and she gave up the idea; accepting in lieu an engagement offered by the directors of the London Pantheon, who gave her a thousand guineas for thirteen nights.

Madame Mara left Paris with her husband, and arrived in London in 1784. Her reception by the public was enthusiastic; and so great was the attraction that the receipts of the house are stated to have amounted to an enormous sum. The Prince of Wales patronized her, and she became "the fashion" at once. Unfortunately for the continuance of her popularity, that was a bad year for the Pantheon; a dissolution of Parliament and general election absorbed the attention of the public to an extent that was seriously injurious to the theatres and other places of amusement.

On the expiration of her engagement at the Pantheon, Mara entered into a joint proprietorship with Linley and Dr. Arnold for the production of oratorios at Drury Lane.

When Madame Mara appeared in London, it happened that George III. conceived the idea of paying a grand tribute to the memory of his favourite composer, the immortal Handel, and it was decided that a selection of music exclusively from the works of that great master should be performed in Westminster Abbey. The directors were in sore distress for a leading female singer; as there were at this time but few first-class singers in London, and these were either pre-engaged or diffident of their power of making their voices heard to advantage in an enormous building like Westminster Abbey. Mara, wishing to overcome an unfavourable impression which had lately gained ground against her,

and also to pay honour to her distinguished countryman, volunteered her gratuitous services. Her offer was gladly accepted, the directors of the Pantheon giving their consent to her appearance.

It would be impossible in words to give even a faint idea of the effect of that magnificent festival. The orchestra was led by the Cramers; the conductors were Joah Bates, Dr. Arnold, and Dupuis. The band consisted of several hundreds of performers. The singers were, in addition to Madame Mara, Signora Storace, Miss Abrams, Miss Poole (afterwards Mrs. Dickons), Rubinelli, Harrison, Bartleman, Sale, Parry, Norris, Kelly, &c.; and the choruses, collected from all parts of the kingdom, amounted to hundreds of voices. The abbey was arranged for the accommodation of the public in a superb and commodious manner, and the tickets of admission were one guinea each. The first performance took place on May 26, 1784; and such was the anxiety to be in time that ladies and gentlemen had their hair dressed overnight, and slept in arm-chairs. The weather being very fine, eager crowds presented themselves at the several doors of the Abbey at nine o'clock, although the doorkeepers were not at their posts, and the orchestra was not finished. At ten o'clock the scene became almost terrifying to the visitors, who, being in full dress, were every moment more incommoded and alarmed by the violence of the crowds pressing forward to get near the

doors. Several of the ladies screamed; others fainted; and the general dismay increased to such an extent that fatal consequences were anticipated. Some of the more irascible among the gentlemen threatened to burst open the doors; "a measure," says Dr. Burney, "which, if adopted, would, probably, have cost many of the more feeble and helpless their lives, as they must, in falling, have been thrown down and trampled on by the robust and impatient part of the crowd." However, except that some went in with "dishevelled hair and torn garments," no real mischief seems to have been done.

The spectacle was gorgeous. The King, Queen, and all the Royal family were ushered to a superb box, opposite the orchestra, by the directors, wearing full court suits, the medal of Handel, struck for the occasion, suspended by white satin rosettes to their breasts, and having white staves in their hands. The body of the cathedral, the galleries, and every corner were crowded with beauty, rank, and fashion, listening with almost devout silence to the grand creations of the great composer, not the faintest token of applause disturbing the impressive solemnity.

Mara was superb in this performance, and gained fresh leaves for her crown of laurel. She surpassed herself in the sublime recitative, "Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously." The full, solemn, and affecting tones of her voice impressed

every heart, and her exquisite style almost vanquished criticism. There were a few, nevertheless, who resisted the magic of her tones. Miss Seward was one June morning, during these performances, breakfasting with Mr. Joah Bates, the director, when she remarked, as a delicate piece of flattery to his wife's singing of Handel's finest airs, that in her opinion Mara put too much gold and fringe upon that solemn robe of melody, "I know that my REDEEMER liveth."

"Do not say gold, madam," replied Joah, tartly; "it was despicable tinsel."

He was yet perfectly conscious of the Mara's magnificent qualities, and perhaps he had been put out of temper by some of the cantatrice's impertinences. A more innocent critic pronounced a judgment on her performance about the same time—the daughter of a nobleman, who was taken by her papa to hear the great vocalist. On the conclusion of "Holy, holy," the young lady continued standing as if entranced, until roused by some persons near her sneering at Mara's dress. Turning round suddenly, with an indignant look, she exclaimed,—"She will go to heaven, for all that, to sing Allelujah."

The second performance was at the Pantheon, on Tuesday evening, May 27th. The audience assembled very early for fear of not gaining admittance, and the crowd was excessive. "The extreme heat of the weather," observes Dr. Burney, "augmented by the

animal heat of more than 1,600 people, closely wedged together, must have considerably diminished the delight which the lovers of music expected to receive from this night's exhibition." This evening Mara produced a tremendous effect in "While I retire"—from *Atalanta*.

The three remaining performances were held at Westminster Abbey, May 29th, June 3rd, and June 5th. During one of them, a striking coincidence happened. The morning had been cloudy and lowering; but when the grand chorus commenced, "Let there be light, and light was over all," the sun burst forth, and with its rays illumined every part of the venerable building. On another occasion, during one of the choruses descriptive of a storm, a hurricane burst over the abbey, and pealed and thundered and rattled in unison with the music. But perhaps the most effective spectacle was presented during the performance of the chorus, "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth." The audience were so moved that the King, Queen, and all present, rose by a simultaneous impulse, and remained standing till the close of the chorus. From this time, it grew to be the fashion to stand while that part of the music was being executed.

Madame Mara gave great offence by persisting in retaining her seat while the Royal family, with all who were present besides—the principal nobility and gentry of the kingdom—stood up. She offered many excuses for her conduct: she was not accustomed to join in

the choruses abroad, and did not think it necessary to rise till her solos came; she was ill; her medical adviser had prohibited her from standing unless under positive necessity. Her supposed perversity became known at Oxford, where she was engaged for the Grand Musical Meeting, and the people of that city resolved to teach her a lesson. Upon her appearance in the theatre, she was called upon from all sides to explain whether she meant to practise the same disrespect there. She did not make any reply, not understanding a word of what they were saying; but Dr. Hayes, a worthy professor whose leading characteristic was a love of "speechifying," came forward, to assure the audience that Madame Mara would stand up during the execution of the choruses. In his eagerness to allay the storm of indignation, however, he blundered egregiously, and made an absurd and childish mistake; the audience laughed, and seemed inclined to recover their good-humour, when she again offended. One of the musicians in the orchestra happened to play a little out of tune, when Mara, in a passion, turned and flung her book at the delinquent. This outburst of irritability hurt the feelings of Dr. Chapman, then Vice-Chancellor, and he rose, exclaiming,—"Madame Mara has conducted herself too ill to be suffered to sing any more before this audience." Instantly a wicked wag cried out, "A riot, by permission of the Vice-Chancellor!" A scene

of the utmost confusion ensued, and the agitated cantatrice quitted the theatre amidst hisses and yells, in high dudgeon. A deputation of gentlemen waited upon her, and promised that she should do exactly as she pleased if she would only return. She did return, and sang the airs allotted to her; but remained seated as usual while the choruses were being sung. A cry arose of "Turn Mara out!" Not comprehending, she smiled, which provoked the audience still more; upon which the Vice-Chancellor said that it was always the rule for every vocalist to join in the choruses. Miss George, one of the singers, explained this to the prima donna, who, staring in bewilderment and vexation, exclaimed,—"Oh! me does not know his rules; me vil go home." Which resolution she immediately carried into effect.

Madame Mara never could acquire a command of the English language, although she passed some time in this country and had been here when a child. But such was her fire, dignity, and tenderness, that even those who were the most keenly sensible to the ridiculous effects of mispronunciation never could smile at her mistakes.

Dr. Chapman made her formally acquainted with the displeasure of the whole body of gownsmen, and prohibited her from ever singing again at the University. Indeed, he went so far as to announce in the *Oxford Journal*, that "the unbecoming conduct of

Madame Mara has given rise to just complaints; but, we doubt not, that as the Oxonians have taken upon them to become her tutors, she will henceforth know better how to comport herself."

To this Mara published an angry reply in the same journal, trying to exculpate herself. "As to Dr. Chapman," she disdainfully concluded, "he deserves nothing but my pity."

She acquired a great reputation as a singer of sacred music, and the directors of the Ancient Concerts engaged her in 1785. It had not been her intention at first to appear on the stage, but chance enlisted her under the operatic standard. It was soon after her début in the metropolis that Michael Kelly, shortly after his return from Italy, happened one evening to offend her. She was in the green-room of Drury Lane with some other ladies at the conclusion of the first part of an oratorio, when Dr. Arnold, turning to the young composer, said, "Pray, Mr. Kelly, tell us what sort of a singer is Signora Storace?" He replied, that in his opinion she was "the best singer in Europe"—meaning, "in her line." Madame Mara, highly offended, on Kelly's quitting the room, said that he was an impertinent coxcomb; and, actuated by professional jealousy, she exerted herself to prevent his being engaged by Dr. Arnold and Linley during the summer. By a fortunate accident Kelly was enabled to atone for his offence. He went one night into the green-room

to speak to Mrs. Crouch, but found the sole occupants of the apartment Madame Mara and M. Pontè, first French-horn player to the King of Prussia, an intimate friend of Mara's, who was engaged to perform a concerto at the oratorio. This gentleman said to Mara in German, "My dear friend, my lips are so parched with fear, that I am sure I shall not make a sound on the instrument. I would give the world for a little water or beer to moisten my lips." "There is nobody to send," replied Madame Mara, in the same language; "and yet if I knew where to get something for you to drink, I would go myself." Kelly, who was standing at the fire, addressed the cantatrice in German, and said, "Madame, I should be sorry for you to have that trouble, and I sit lazy by; I will with great pleasure go and get M. Pontè some porter." He accordingly despatched a messenger for a foaming tankard; and on its arrival he handed it to the thirsty and grateful musician, who at that instant was summoned to play his concerto. Madame Mara gracefully thanked Kelly for his attention, and gave him a warm invitation to call at her house in Pall Mall—an invitation which he was so glad to receive that the next day, at two o'clock, he presented himself. During the interview which passed, she frankly told him that she had taken a violent dislike to him, but that his kindness to her timid friend on the preceding evening had gained her heart. Having thus apologized, she

inquired pointedly if he took a benefit at the theatre that season? On learning that he purposed so doing, she said, "It was my intention not to appear on the stage; yet if you think my playing for your benefit for the first and only time will be of service to you, I beg you will command me."

"I was thunderstruck at her kindness and liberality," says Kelly, "and thankfully accepted. She fixed on Mandane, in *Artaxerxes*, and brought the greatest receipt ever known at that house, as the whole pit, with the exception of two benches, was railed into boxes. So much," he adds, sententiously, "for a little German proficiency, a little common civility, and a pot of porter." It was a wonderful act of condescension on her part, for she was as obstinate as she was gifted.

Madame Mara proved so valuable an addition to the Opera company that she was persuaded to remain on the stage. It was with difficulty that arrangements were made for opening the Opera House in the beginning of 1786. The bankruptcy being settled, Sir John Gallini was now the happy individual "invested with the power of ruining himself." No performers having arrived from Italy, the company was not completed till the middle of the season, when Madame Mara became for a time the sole support of the establishment. There was no leading male singer, so the weak and unequal, though scientific Babbini was promoted to first parts; his own being consigned to Tasca,

a bass singer who had appeared in the comic opera of the preceding year. The first opera was *Didone Abbandonata*, a pasticcio, for which the Mara had made a very judicious selection of songs from Sacchini, Piccini, Mortellari, Gazzaniga, and other eminent composers: "all of which were so much admired," says Lord Mount Edgecumbe, "that two were encored every night, each of them receiving that mark of approbation in its turn," a token of admiration never accorded before to any other singer except Manzoli. Her own performance in this opera was perfect, and gave entire satisfaction.

In addition to singing at the Opera, Mara appeared at various musical festivals. That season she sang at Worcester, her husband too being engaged among the leading instrumentalists. He was now as attentive as possible to his wife. Once, while on a visit to the Earl of Exeter, at that nobleman's splendid seat, Burleigh, near Stamford, in Lincolnshire, Madame Mara expressed in private her distaste for the earl's claret. Mara immediately sent a servant to Stamford for a post-chaise and four horses, with which he dashed off to London, and returned the next morning with a case of claret from her own cellar. Certainly he was to assist in drinking it.

In 1788, Mara went to Turin for the season of the Carnival. At the theatre there it was an established custom to open the new season with a fresh singer,

who supplied the place of the departing vocalist, whether a soprano or a tenor. The tenor whom she was to succeed, piqued at his dismissal, and anxious to prevent her success, ridiculed her as a perfect monster of ugliness, and an abominably bad singer. Mara heard this, and devised a plan for mortifying the Italian. At her first rehearsal, she made her appearance in a formal old-fashioned dress, and, laughing to herself at the joke, sang as much out of tune as possible. Sure of his triumph, the signor went about saying to everybody he knew, "Didn't I say so? In person she is as ugly as sin; and her voice—never was heard so vile a jargon of sounds." What was his dismay when, the following evening, Madame Mara presented herself dressed with simple elegance, and sang in a voice sweet as music itself, with an air of conscious superiority. The signor vanished, and was never heard of more in Turin. The German songstress was crowned upon the stage, and the next day was honoured by an invitation to Court, where she was received by the King and Queen with the most condescending kindness, and loaded with rich presents.

She went from Turin to Venice, where she had again to contend against the jealousy of the Italian singers. But her reception by the public was enthusiastic; and on the night which terminated her engagement, an unexpected ovation was organized for her. On the fall of the curtain, when recalled, she found a richly

decorated throne prepared. She was seated thereon, when the canvas clouds above opened, and a shower of roses, intermingled with complimentary sonnets, rained down, and the curtain rising behind her discovered the figures of Apollo and the Muses pointing towards her with admiring looks. A deputation of ladies and gentlemen then waited on her with congratulations, and she was induced to promise that she would return the following season.

After this she was invited to Rome and Naples, but she preferred to return to London, where she arrived in 1790. During that season she appeared at the Gloucester Musical Festival; her husband being, as usual, among the principal instrumental performers.

Unforeseen difficulties preventing the King's Theatre from opening the next season, the Pantheon was transformed into a temporary Opera House by Mr. Wyatt, who ingeniously contrived to enlarge the building without injuring it. The regular opera was here very successfully carried on. Mara, Pacchierotti, and Lazzarini—a pleasing singer with a sweet tenor voice —were at the head of the serious opera, and Casentini, "a very pretty woman and genteel actress," with Lazzarini for tenor, Morelli and Cipriani, principal buffos, supported the comic. "It was the first time Pacchierotti had met with a good prima donna since Madame Lebrun," remarks Lord Mount Edgecumbe. "His duettos with Mara were the most

perfect pieces of execution I ever heard." They appeared in Sacchini's *Rinaldo*, Bertoni's *Quinto Fabio* (revived), and a charming new piece by Sarti, called *Idalide;* or, *La Vergine del Sole.* Lord Mount Edgecumbe decides that, altogether, he never enjoyed the Opera so well as at this theatre.

In 1792, Mara, intending to return to Germany, went to Paris, where she witnessed the horrors of the Revolution, and saw the mob accompanying the unhappy Queen to the Temple. With a thrill of grief, she beheld her former patroness, with a countenance pale and wan, seated in an open chariot, surrounded by guards with drawn swords. On returning to England, she arranged her domestic affairs. Her husband had exhausted her patience by his extravagance and vices, and, painful as the alternative was, she felt that she must separate from him for ever. She settled on him an annuity sufficient to afford him a competency for life; and from that time they never met.

Harris, of the Theatre Royal, Dublin, engaged Madame Mara in 1797; and despite her personal disadvantages—which were great to those who had seen the resplendent Mrs. Billington or the lovely Mrs. Crouch in the character—she chose to appear as Polly, which she did with undoubted success. "She could not sing ill, but she was not exactly suited for the *pretty Polly* of the *Beggar's Opera,*" was Mount Edgecumbe's remark. She sang the airs with a delicious

simplicity, scarcely ever calling in the aid of a shake or a roulade. Pure enunciation, and the most precise intonation of the scale, were what she particularly aimed at. Dr. Arnold said that he had seen her dance, and go through the most violent and fatiguing gesticulations while running through the scale, yet such was her power of chest that the tone was as undisturbed and free as if she had been standing in the sedate position of the orchestra. Mrs. Billington, who had no professional jealousies, declared that she considered Mara's execution to be superior to her own in genuine effect, though not in extent, compass, rapidity, and complication. "She was by turns majestic, tender, pathetic, or elegant," and neither in ornament, graces, nor in cadences did she ever lose sight of the original character of the melody. If any one praised the rapid vocalization of a singer, Mara would significantly demand, "Can she sing six plain notes?" To a full, rich-toned voice she added, however, when the occasion called for it, brilliant execution, and a pathos and elevation of sentiment which rendered her at once the finest bravura and oratorio singer ever heard. Her rendering of Handel's airs—especially "I know that my Redeemer liveth"—was faultless. Her contempt for unmeaning florid ornamentation was once very forcibly expressed. Being one night at the Lent oratorio, and hearing one of the female singers going through some of her own favourite pieces, she

was asked by a lady who sat next her what she thought of the singer's performance. "Ma'am," she replied, "she dances a tolerably good fandango." She was a thoroughly scientific vocalist, and a pet theory with her was that the best way to begin the education of a singer would be to teach the pupil to tune an instrument or to play on the violin; she declared that if she had a daughter, the child should "learn the fiddle" before she uttered a note. "For," said she, "how can you best convey a just notion of slight variations in the pitch of a note? By a fixed instrument? No. By the voice? No. But by sliding the finger up the string you instantly make the most minute variations visibly as well as audibly perceptible."

"Madame Mara, during her residence in this country, taught singing at home, at two guineas per lesson," says Dr. Kitchener. "I mentioned to her, that I feared the expense, being double any other musician, would confine her number." She said, "Well, I cannot help that: when I give a lesson in singing, I sing with my scholars; by so doing they learn in half the time they can if taught in the usual way—by the master merely playing the tune of the song on the piano. People cannot teach what they don't know—my scholars have my singing to imitate—those of other masters seldom anything but the tinkling of a piano. The fatigue to the teacher, and the superior ability required to teach it, certainly

deserve double the price paid for learning to play on an instrument." It was a favourite maxim of hers that singing can only be taught by a singer—adding, that such was the fatigue attending it, that they should not attempt to teach others till they have done singing in public themselves. She very benevolently gave gratuitous lessons to several professional singers; among others, she instructed Miss Povey, whom she pronounced to be the most promising singer she had ever heard in England.

As time wore on, Mara began to decline in voice, and consequently in favour; the managers of the Opera no longer cared to secure her services, and she had to content herself with singing at the Ancient Music and other concerts for a long time. In 1801, during Lent, she sang in Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, in which she gave, for the first time, "the admired air" of "Consider, fond shepherd." In this she was accompanied on the oboe by Parke, who followed her with such wonderful accuracy through all her vocal flights that at the termination of the evening's performance she observed good-humouredly to Dr. Arnold, "I think that, in the song 'Consider, fond shepherd,' if I could have made a flight to Germany, Mr. Parke would have followed me." "Yes, madame," replied the doctor, gallantly, "if you had made a flight to the infernal regions, no doubt he would have followed you there, to make the Apollo-like attempt of conducting you,

like another Eurydice, back again to delight the public."

At last she quitted England in 1802, partly being offended, it was rumoured, by some animadversions which had been made on a fracas which had occurred between herself and her maid; for Mara, who could sing sacred music in so thrilling a manner and with such sublimity of expression, had not the softest of tempers; though, like most irascible persons, she behaved with much courtesy "in company." She took a formal leave of the public in a concert, which yielded about seven hundred pounds. Mrs. Billington, in compliance with her entreaty, agreed to sing for her at this concert; and it is said that Mara was so overcome by her rival's generosity that she burst into tears on being informed of her consent. The sister queens sang a duet, composed expressly for the occasion, but of which no trace remains.

"When the incomparable Madame Mara took leave of me on her return to the Continent," says Dr. Kitchener, "I could not help expressing my regret that she had not taken my advice to publish those songs of Handel (her matchless performance of which gained her that undisputed pre-eminence which she enjoyed), with the embellishments, etc., with which she enriched them. This inimitable singer replied, 'Indeed, my good friend, you attribute my success to a very different source than the real one. It was not

what I did, but the manner in which I did it. I could sing six simple notes and produce every effect I could wish; another singer may sing those very same notes with very different effect. I am sure it was to my expression of the words that I owe everything. People have often said to me, 'Madame Mara, why do not you introduce more pretty things, and passages, and graces in your singing?' I say, 'These pretty things are very pretty, to be sure, but the proper expression of the words and the music is a great deal better.' This and her extraordinary industry were the secrets of her undisputed sovereignty. She told me that when she was encored in a song, which she very often was, that on her return home she seldom retired to rest without first inventing a new cadence for the next performance of it. Here is an example for young singers!"

Madame Mara went to Paris, whence she proceeded the following year to Dresden, where she immediately became the object of universal enthusiasm; gaining her first plaudits by the irreproachable manner in which she performed the part of Agrippina, in the opera of *Britannico*, by Graun. Unbounded admiration was excited by the style in which she sang behind the scenes the aria, "Mi paventi il figlio indegno," "with a voice of tremendous power, and yet with a maternal pathos that," Zelter affirms, "forced bitter tears from my eyes every time I heard her. The

piece," he adds, "is a regular bravura air, such as was the fashion in those days: it was as if a thousand nightingales were straining their throats to warble for revenge." Her acting was fine, though connoisseurs sometimes censured her for want of "action" in passionate parts: hypercriticism which made her indignant. "What!" she would exclaim, "am I to sing with my hands and legs? I am a singer; what I cannot do with my voice I will not do at all." Zelter, however, says that in tragic parts she seemed to rise a head taller than usual. "I never beheld anything grander than her Queen Rodelinda," he declares emphatically.

She was determined at any sacrifice to preserve her dignity as a Queen of Song, and having offered to sing for the entertainment of the Elector, when told that his highness generally was pleased to have the musical performance during dinner, she replied, haughtily, that it would be impossible for her to sing while others were eating; so she lost a hundred ducats, and the Elector an aria.

The good people of Rheinsberg compassionated the cruel situation in which she was placed by the misconduct of her husband, who had, by his extravagance, dragged her into debt, and they abused the Prince's favourite in no measured terms. He had not the slightest regard for anybody, and treated even his patron in a manner so insulting that it is surprising he

was permitted to retain his position. "The Prince being then at Berlin with his suite," Zelter tells us, "and eclipsing with his entertainments the royal redoutes, invited the Court to hear the incomparable Mara perform. All came but the King and one other, who was also missed, namely, Mara himself. At last they dragged him in. He was drunk, and refused before the whole Court, in spite of his patron, to play, so that the Prince could not but feel himself publicly compromised. The King regarded the insult as a species of high treason against his consort, who was present, and this was considered to be the cause of his severity on the occasion of Mara's first desertion." He was connected with a gang of smugglers, who held their meetings in the fine residence of Rheinsberg, near the frontier of Mecklenburg. The King, who was continually exasperated by the audacious impudence of the reckless violoncellist, tried in vain to break him in, and once his irate majesty condemned Jean Mara to sleep in the guard-house, on hard boards, during the Carnival, the common soldiers being licensed to play the roughest tricks with him. Reichardt, as a patronizing Capellmeister, wrote a long account of the hardships to which the unfortunate wretch was subjected, and despatched it to the King. "Humph!" said his majesty, reading the letter, and taking a handful of snuff, "I thought I should have thrown the trouble of the Opera off my shoulders, and now I have the old plague

again, with the addition of one fool more into the bargain."

In 1801, Jean Mara was at Sondershausen, where, strange to say, he conducted himself very sedately, never betraying the least sign of that inclination to intemperance which was the bane of his life. He was then in the greatest distress, although his wife supplied him from time to time with considerable sums of money and various presents; but his respectable conduct did not last very long. "About this time," says Gerber, "he went to Holland, where he indulged to such a degree his fatal inclination to drunkenness, that, after having lost every feeling of propriety, he was seen day and night in the lowest pothouses, playing the fiddle for sailors to dance."

Nobody could imagine why Elizabeth Mara would not consent to give up her debauched, depraved husband altogether. She regarded him with admiration and affection, in spite of his vices; and once, on Zelter expressing to her his surprise at the generosity of her conduct towards the unprincipled ruffian who held her in legal slavery, she replied with a mixture of naïveté and loving tenderness—"But you must allow that he is the handsomest man ever seen!"

At last she was freed by death, in the summer of 1808. Jean Mara closed his existence in the company of his disreputable smuggling associates, dying at Schiedam, near Rotterdam. Four years before her

husband's death, Madame Mara went to St. Petersburg, where she enjoyed the patronage of the royal family, and sang at the Opera and at public concerts. From St. Petersburg she repaired, in 1806, to Moscow, where she was so well received that she resolved to settle there, and purchased property two years previous to the death of her husband. On finding herself at liberty, she married a flute-player named Florio. She remained at Moscow till the burning of that capital, when she lost much of her possessions. This reverse of fortune compelled her to go to Revel, where she supported herself by giving lessons in music.

Early in the winter of 1820, she came through Berlin to London, the scene of her greatest triumphs. No one was at all aware of her return, or, indeed, even of her existence, and her reappearance was totally unlooked-for, but she was foolish enough to determine on giving a public concert at the King's Theatre. She was now in her seventy-second year, her powers had failed her, and her youthful attractions vanished, though she would not admit this herself. That she had some doubts of her powers, however, was evidenced by her refusal to open her mouth at the rehearsal of her concert. It was to be anticipated altogether that the concert announced by the Messrs. Knyvett, at which was to appear "a most celebrated singer, whom they were not yet at liberty to name," would prove a failure. Curiosity, however, drew a scanty audience; there

were some persons of note in the boxes, and a good many connoisseurs collected in the pit. Two or three glees were sung by Miss Travis, the Knyvetts, Sale, &c., a fine aria of Storace's was given by Braham, and a concerto played by F. Cramer, who led the band; the concert being conducted by Mr. Greatorex. At the very moment of the most impatient expectation, when the cantatrice ought to have appeared and made her curtsey, Mr. Bellamy came forward to apologize for Madame Mara, who was, he said, labouring under a severe cold and hoarseness; but rather than postpone her concert (the night had already been changed), she had determined to use her best endeavours, for which he solicited the indulgence of the audience.

Madame Mara herself then came forward, animated and smiling. She sang an air of Guglielmi's, Handel's "What tho' I trace," and a cavatina by Paer, "Quale smania in alma io sento?" People looked at each other when she began. Her tones were, it is true, less feeble, less tremulous, less attenuated than might have been supposed; but the swelling, thrilling voice which had once flooded Westminster Abbey with the glorious music of Handel could not be traced in this strange piping. The matchless organ, which, it had been declared, was miraculously preserved—the resistless energy and force which had erst held thousands in breathless attention —"the majesty and fervour that kept almost equal pace

with the sublime sentences of Holy Writ"—all the exquisite qualifications of the Mara were passed away for ever. Even her graces and ornaments, once so chaste, so scientific, were now absurd and tasteless; and in the middle of "What tho' I trace," she introduced a roulade of three ascending and five descending notes upon the monosyllable *I*, which was characterized as being at once vulgar and impertinent. After this, the attention of the audience was "scarcely respectful." "It was truly grievous," says Kelly, "to see such transcendent talents as she once possessed so sunk—so fallen. I used every effort in my power to prevent her committing herself, but in vain."

The result of this unlucky experiment was, that Messrs. Knyvett relinquished her services; and in 1821 poor Madame Mara turned her steps to her native land; and upon her arrival at Cassel, the first thing she asked for was "poor Der Truselgasse." The landlord of the inn was surprised to hear a lady who had dashed up in a handsome travelling equipage inquire for a mean street, but the lady's waiting-maid pronounced the magic name of Mara, and the mystery was explained. Madame Mara immediately sought the place of her birth, and indulged in the feelings the scene evoked. "Yes," she exclaimed, on returning, "I have seen our old habitation. I feel I am still a true Casselanarin."

From Cassel—where she was treated with much

respect by the highest inhabitants of the town, and also with flattering attention by the Elector—she again went to Esthonia, where she prudently subsided into a pleasant gossiping old music-mistress. Her manner was as lively and her conversation as agreeable as of yore, and doubtless she ascribed the bad taste of the English public to the innovations modern flippancy had made on the good old style. The most difficult thing in the world, perhaps, is to believe that one has outgrown one's youth; and those who hold the theory that impossibility is a myth of the imagination, have certainly never entered on the amiable task of trying to convince a faded queen of beauty or of song that it is her own fault or misfortune that she no longer attracts. Madame Mara celebrated her eighty-third birthday on the 23rd February, 1831, on which auspicious occasion the great poet Goethe offered her a poetical tribute. The latter part of her life was passed at Revel, where she died in January, 1833.

CHAPTER XI.

ANNA MARIA CROUCH.

Peregrine Phillips was descended from the younger branch of a respectable and ancient Welsh family, the elder branch of which was graced by a long line of baronets,—the last of whom was created a peer of Ireland in 1776. His early life was unhappy, and he several times quitted his home to travel to various parts of the world, residing for some time in North America. On returning finally to England, he married a Miss Gascoyne, the daughter of a wealthy farmer in Worcestershire; he was then an attorney-at-law, held in much esteem. Six children were born to the couple: Mary Anne, Peregrine, Henrietta, Anna Maria, Sophia, and Edward Erasmus, who died in his infancy.

Anna Maria, through whose talents the family was afterwards to become eminent, was born on the 20th April, 1763, in Gray's Inn Lane. From her earliest childhood, her beautiful voice attracted universal attention and admiration. Her father being the

professional adviser of Sir Watkin Lewes, the child was introduced to that gentleman's wife, who patronized her, and frequently invited her to her house. Of a singularly affectionate and unselfish nature, little Nancy often felt uncomfortable at the idea of being thus petted and praised, while her sisters were left at home unnoticed; though they never evinced the slightest jealousy. Sometimes, with tears trembling in her soft eyes, she would say pathetically, "I should be very happy if my sisters were going with me; but nobody can tell how I grieve at leaving them at home. Mary Anne, who is old enough to be my mamma's companion, may not, perhaps, mind it so much; but poor Henrietta, who is so near my own age, and who is my playfellow also, she, I am sure, must feel *very sorry*. Well, when I have any power of my own, my sisters shall know how I love them, for they shall share in all my pleasures." The cakes, sweetmeats, or any other treasures or dainties which she received, were all carefully preserved for her two beloved elder sisters whom she was obliged to leave at home.

She was instructed in music, at a very tender age, by Mr. Wafer, organist of Berwick Street Chapel, by whose tuition she profited so well that at ten she could sing "The Soldier tired," and accompany herself on the pianoforte with precision and effect. Many of Nancy's early days were spent with a good little old man and his widowed sister, who partly trained her.

The little girl was very assiduous, though exceedingly diffident. Being requested on one occasion to sing for an old friend, an officer who had just returned from abroad, she instantly commenced, "See the conquering hero comes!" and gave the words uncommon expression; but before she finished the song, her fingers trembled, her voice faltered, and she fell back fainting, overpowered by her feelings, although she was under eleven years of age at the time.

Anna was still a child when Mrs. Phillips died, leaving her husband in charge of three very young daughters. A lucrative place in the Wine Licence Office, added to the emoluments of his profession, rendered Mr. Phillips able to support himself and family in a comfortable manner. Mary Anne was just married to a Mr. Scadgell, a builder, and Peregrine was apprenticed to a seal engraver. Anna Maria was placed with her aunt, Mrs. Le Clerc, a prudent and sensible woman, living in Prince's Street, Cavendish Square, who had entered into partnership with a trimming-maker, and Nancy, of course, assisted her aunt in the business, which was quiet and sedentary. While with her aunt, two ladies became acquainted with her, and, taking a fancy to her, invited her on a visit; she was sixteen, lively, lovely, and loveable, and a naval captain in his Majesty's service made her an offer of his hand and heart, but as he was considerably older than herself, the young girl declined it.

Her father did not lose sight of the advantages which might be derived from the proper cultivation of her voice; and being fond of the stage, he decided to train his daughter as a vocalist, and articled her, in 1779, to Mr. Linley, the joint patentee of Drury Lane Theatre, for three years. She regarded this "dark, stern, gigantic" teacher with very different feelings from the love she had cherished towards Mr. Wafer; who, she said, was "of fairy race, light complexion, and of meek appearance." Indeed, she confesses, "I trembled sometimes when I looked at him, for I actually believed that my poor dear little old master might go into the sleeve of Mr. Linley's great-coat."

At the expiration of her term of three years, the young student was considered qualified to appear in the arduous part of Mandane in *Artaxerxes*, although she had not yet completed her seventeenth year. She made her début in the winter of 1780 at Drury Lane, and was received by a fashionable and crowded audience with flattering applause. Her powers were greatly checked by her excessive timidity, but the public were indulgent, and rather liked her modest diffidence; her youth, her beauty, and her voice, pleaded effectually for the candidate. "I remember distinctly the surprise which her beauty excited," says Boaden, in his *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*. "She was always timid upon the stage, and really needed all the indulgence which she experienced; but she was infinitely pro-

mising of musical excellence; and as to countenance and figure, she realized the visions of even poetical imagination. He who came from the study of Spenser's Una beheld the seeming origin of such a portrait in Miss Phillips." For the sake of effect, Miss Prudom, who made her début the same evening, took the part of Arbaces, in which she acquitted herself very well, considering that she spoke English very badly. The beautiful Mrs. Baddeley was the royal Artaxerxes, and Miss Wright, afterwards Mrs. Blanchard, was the Semira. "The evening," observes Boaden, enthusiastically, "seemed the triumph of beauty even more than that of harmony." Mr. Vernon was Artabanes, and Mr. Dubellamy, Rimenes.

Being now placed in a more independent position, the young singer took the upper part of a genteel private house in Drury Lane, which was furnished by her father, who came to reside with her. She also requested her aunt, Mrs. Le Clerc, to live with her, as that lady's business was going greatly out of fashion.

Her next character was Clarissa, which she performed for her own benefit, and at the termination of the Drury Lane season she was engaged as first singer at the Theatre Royal, Liverpool, where she appeared as Polly. From Liverpool she returned to Drury Lane, when she appeared as the Goddess of Beauty, in the masque of *King Arthur*, which was got up in a superb style. Miss Romanzini, afterwards Mrs. Bland, was the

Cupid to her Venus; Mr. Smith played King Arthur, and Miss Farren made a most interesting Emmeline. She was again engaged in 1782 at Liverpool. Her reputation was now firmly established, and Mr. Daly, manager of the Theatre Royal in Smock Alley, Dublin, having heard of the fame of the lovely Miss Phillips, offered her an engagement in the summer of 1783. She accepted it, and went with her father to Ireland, at the close of the London season. Dr. Johnson, desirous of befriending her, gave the beautiful young prima donna a somewhat original letter of introduction, couched in terms scarcely flattering to his charming friend:

"SIR,— "*London, May* 31, 1783.

"THE bringer of this letter is the father of Miss Phillips, a singer, who comes to try her voice on the stage at Dublin.

"Mr. Phillips is one of my oldest friends, and as I am of opinion that neither he nor his daughter will do anything to disgrace their benefactors, I take the liberty of entreating you to countenance and protect them, so far as may be suitable to your station and character; and shall consider myself obliged by any favourable notice which they shall have the honour of receiving from you.

"I am, sir,

"*To the Right Hon.* "Your humble servant,
William Wyndham." "SAM. JOHNSON."

In Ireland the young vocalist met with John Kemble, who had appeared the preceding February, and who was then engaged with his sister, the glorious Siddons, in the Emerald Isle. They were mutually pleased to become acquainted, and contracted a friendship which gave rise to a report that they were engaged to be married—a rumour which gained colour from a circumstance which happened, when they both went shortly after to perform at Limerick, with Mrs. Siddons. Miss Phillips performed on alternate nights with the tragedian and his sister; and as the lovely English songstress was beyond measure popular, and the theme of universal conversation in the city, she was of course the cynosure of the young men. One evening, on the conclusion of the piece, *Love in a Village*, some officers of a militia regiment quartered in Limerick, being flushed with wine, declared their intention of escorting the beautiful Rosetta home, and rushing behind the scenes, terrified the young prima donna by their loud tones and tipsy gallantries; she ran into her dressing-room, and locked the door, "which these heroes swore they would break open without ceremony." Her father, who was laid up with gout, having requested Mr. Kemble to see his daughter home, the tragedian, hearing the uproar and ascertaining its cause, hurried to the scene of action, and politely requested the officers to withdraw. They declined to comply, and vehemently reiterated their intention of not quitting the theatre

without Miss Phillips. Kemble drew his sword, and said that having been deputed by the lady's father to see her safely home, he should execute his commission at the hazard of his life. He then requested Miss Phillips to open the door of her dressing-room, promising that she should not be molested; and the agitated girl issued forth, but at the sight of the brawlers was about to retreat precipitately. "Be under no apprehension," said Kemble, audibly; "I am resolved to protect you. If any gentleman is dissatisfied with my conduct, I will meet him, if he pleases, to-morrow morning; if he can prove it to be wrong, I shall be ready to apologize for it." Then, offering his arm to his trembling charge, he led her in safety to her chair.

The following morning, Lord Muskerry, the colonel of the regiment, called upon the tragedian, and told him that every apology he might demand should be made by the offenders. Kemble referred him to Miss Phillips, who was, he said, the really insulted person. Miss Phillips, however, told the commanding officer, with her usual naïveté, that "she would have no apology; all that she required was, that the gentlemen in future would go from the theatre with the rest of the audience, and leave her to return home quietly with her father, or with the person whom he might appoint to conduct her." This incident was ever gratefully remembered by Miss Phillips, who never

mentioned it without expressions of admiration of the spirit and perfect command of temper displayed by Kemble.

The next year she again went to Dublin, and was received with renewed favour. While there, she had many admirers, one of whom, to prove the fervour of his attachment, threatened to shoot her if she declined his suit, saying he would go into the theatre for the purpose. On the next night, she peeped through the interstices of the curtain, to see if he was prepared to carry his threat into execution, and seeing him seated in the second row of the pit, she did not for a moment doubt that he intended to keep his resolution, and in terror flew to procure some one to remove him from the house. He was taken into custody, but no weapons being found upon him, he was liberated; his friends subsequently persuaded him to leave the country.

Among those admirers who adopted more persuasive measures to win her favour was a young Irish nobleman, who induced her to elope with him. They fled; but an insuperable obstacle to their legal union unexpectedly presented itself. The youthful lord was a minor, and so well known that he could not prevail on any priest in Ireland to perform the marriage ceremony. In despair at this unlooked-for impediment, they set out for Scotland, with all possible celerity; but their mutual friends had set out in pursuit, and came on them just as they were waiting for the wind to change,

that they might sail. The lovers were immediately severed, never to meet again, and Miss Phillips was obliged unwillingly to return to her theatrical duties. Her first appearance at Drury Lane after this most untoward adventure was as Emily in the *Double Disguise*, in which Mrs. Wrighton had, as an Irish chambermaid, to sing to her a song, one verse of which ran thus:—

> "Each pretty young miss, with a long heavy purse,
> Is courted, and flattered, and easily had;
> She longs to be taken for better, for worse,
> And quickly *elopes* with an IRISH LAD."

These lines she sang with such a malicious archness that the audience, quickly applying them, were in convulsions of laughter, and the song was vociferously encored. The situation in which Miss Phillips found herself became almost insupportable: confused, blushing, and scarcely able to stand, she was forced to retain her place while the lines were repeated.

Some months afterwards, the fascinating Anna Maria noticed one evening, in the stage-box, a very handsome man, who constantly kept his eyes fixed on her with such open admiration that his feelings could not be mistaken. This was Mr. Crouch, a lieutenant in his Majesty's navy, who had become deeply smitten with the captivating singer. He obtained an introduction to her, declared his passion, and pressed his suit with such ardour, that before the February of 1785 they

were married. For family reasons the marriage was kept secret some time from all but the bride's relations. The match was certainly not altogether a prudent or a brilliant one, for the gentleman had, besides his pay, nothing but "expectations" to look forward to; while the bride had several drains on her liberal salary: she was obliged to provide for her father, who was subject to frequent and expensive illnesses; for her aunt, who had been disabled by a terrible fall downstairs; for her youngest sister, Sophia, whom she had just apprenticed to a fashionable milliner in Jermyn Street, and partially for her brother, who was an artist. Mrs. Crouch continued to perform in her maiden name for the remainder of the season, when an accident happened which almost proved fatal. At the latter end of the season, she had one morning attended rehearsal, and turning round hastily, when at the top of a flight of steps, she missed her footing, and fell to the ground. She suffered agony all day, but generously resolved if possible to sing at night, fearing to cause loss and disappointment to the friend for whose benefit she was to appear. After the performance, she got home to her lodgings in Charles Street, St. James's Square, suffering acutely, and at an early hour the next morning, she was prematurely delivered of a little girl, who lived only two days. For weeks, her life was in danger, and her death was often announced: grief for the loss of her infant preyed greatly upon her mind.

On her recovery, Mr. Crouch took apartments in Rathbone Place, and her engagement at Drury Lane was renewed in her married name. She was greeted with the warmest sympathy on her re-appearance, and again became the favourite of the public; though on the advent of Mrs. Billington, in 1786, she was compelled to yield the position of first singer to that wonderful vocalist. Soon after this, she had the satisfaction of seeing her young sister Sophia, then fifteen, married to Mr. Horrebow, a wealthy Dane, captain of a Danish East Indiaman. That summer Mrs. Crouch was engaged at Liverpool, and at the close of the winter theatres set out, accompanied by her husband.

On her return to town, she was introduced to Michael Kelly, who had just appeared at Drury Lane, and from his long absence, had nearly forgotten his native language; Mrs. Crouch, taking a fancy to him, good-naturedly bestowed much pains in recalling it to his memory; a kindness which he repaid by instructing her in music. Mrs. Crouch proposed to her husband that Kelly, a stranger in London, should reside with them; a proposal which the young musician on his part gladly accepted, and they accordingly took a house in Titchfield Street. Lionel was the first character in which Kelly appeared; Mrs. Crouch being the Clarissa. Kelly had imparted new graces to her singing, and she had taught him to give proper em-

phasis to the dialogue, so that when they appeared together they played and sang with such spirit and judgment that the audience applauded them "to the echo."

Scarcely three years from the date of her first accident, she met with another which likewise threatened to be fatal. At the end of January, 1788, she was going to rehearsal one morning in a hackney coach, when the vehicle suddenly overturned, and her face was dreadfully cut by the broken glass; for having her sister Sophia's little boy in her arms, she flung herself between him and the window. She was carried to a house near, and a surgeon sent for, who assured her that there was no glass in the wounds, and was going to bind them up. The torture she felt convinced her that he was deceived, and she sent for Mr. Cruikshanks, her own surgeon, who extracted many pieces of glass. It was long before she was sufficiently recovered to present herself on the stage; slight scars always remained, materially injuring the delicacy of her face.

In 1788-9, Mr. Kemble produced *Macbeth*, with the music of Matthew Lock. Mrs. Crouch was one of the witches, and created great dissatisfaction by appearing in "a fancy hat, powdered hair, rouge, point lace, and fine linen." The summer approaching, Mrs. Crouch went to Ireland with her husband and Kelly. She was so grateful for his tuition

that she would now never consent to accept engagements unless he also was engaged. "I will never sing in any theatre without him," she frequently declared.

In the course of a sojourn at Margate in 1790, Mrs. Crouch had an opportunity of indulging the native benevolence of her heart. A poor girl, an inhabitant of the place, being deprived of the use of her limbs, was reduced to the utmost distress. Mr. Phillips, who was living at St. Peter's, drew up a petition to the inhabitants and visitors, by which he gained a considerable sum, and some persons of rank undertook to obtain subscriptions. They came to Mrs. Crouch and Kelly, who thought their best donation would be to play a night at the theatre for the girl's benefit. The piece announced was the *Beggar's Opera*, Mrs. Crouch as Polly, and Kelly as Macheath. Every place in the house was taken, the whole pit, one row excepted, was railed into boxes, and the receipts of that night, with many liberal presents sent to the poor girl, were sufficient to procure her a comfortable subsistence for life.

From Margate Mrs. Crouch went with a party to Paris, where she stayed three weeks, attending the theatre every night. Her first visit to the Grand Opera might have had unpleasant results. She sat in a conspicuous part of the house, and noticed that the eyes of every one were directed towards her box;

the audience whispering and frowning, and looking from her to each other with every token of displeasure. She was inexpressibly annoyed and perplexed, until a gentleman who sat near explained the cause: she wore a white rose in her hair, and white was the Royalist colour! "She was on thorns until she quitted the house," says Kelly, relating the incident, "but met with no insult."

On the 1st January, 1791, the opera of the *Siege of Belgrade* was brought out with great success at Drury Lane, Mrs. Crouch performing Catherine, and Kelly the Seraskier.

A few months after this, Mr. and Mrs. Crouch, who had not lived happily together, agreed to separate, and she consented to allow her husband a portion of her professional emoluments, which he was mean enough to take. Kelly still continued to board with Mrs. Crouch; and they gave delightful musical parties at their house in Pall Mall, where the talents of Mrs. Billington, Madame Mara, Mrs. Bland, Signora Storace, Jack Johnson, and other vocalists enhanced the attractions of these reunions, which were patronized by the Prince of Wales. At these meetings Mrs. Crouch would preside, arrayed in the costume which she had worn at the theatre; a fancy which was carried off so coquettishly by her wit, grace, and beauty that it was irresistibly charming. The first personages of the day were to be met here; and some-

times Sheridan would arrive from a late debate, and sparkle in the saloon, with his carefully-prepared impromptus. "Points of management were often settled in five minutes at such a rencontre with Sheridan that he could not be brought to decide by all the morning solicitations of the parties who besieged his dwelling-house." Kemble and his brother Stephen, too, would frequently be found in company with the numerous celebrities who clustered round the lovely vocalist.

On their way to Ireland, in 1793, Mrs. Crouch and Kelly encountered a terrific storm, and an alarm was spread that they had been cast ashore liteless; but Mr. Phillips received a letter from his daughter dated the day after that on which the papers alleged she had been found dead. Anxious friends thronged daily to Suffolk Street, to inquire into the truth of the report; and when they re-appeared in London the pair were welcomed with uproarious delight and congratulation.

Upon the 19th June, the next year, the splendid musical spectacle of *Lodoiska* was produced. It was translated from the French by John Kemble, and the music selected by Storace from the works of Cherubini and Kreutzer, and enriched with some charming melodies of his own composition. The *mise en scène* was "picturesquely grand and beautiful," the dresses gorgeous, and every detail perfect. Kemble, who was part proprietor of the theatre at the time, took the

utmost care in getting up the piece, and was rewarded by the rapturous reception it met with. Mrs. Crouch was the Princess Lodoiska, Kelly personated Floreski, and the two Bannisters, Barrymore, Charles Kemble, Dignum, Sedgwick, Aikin, and Palmer, also performed in the spectacle. The last scene was heightened by an unexpected and fine effect from an accident which happened to Mrs. Crouch. When she was in the blazing castle, the wind blew the flames close to her; but she had sufficient fortitude and presence of mind not to move from her painful situation, although she remained at the hazard of her life. Kelly, seeing her danger, ran up the bridge, which was at a great height from the ground, towards the tower to rescue her; when just as he was quitting the platform a carpenter prematurely pulled away one of its supports. "Down I fell," says Kelly, "and at the same moment the fiery tower, in which was Mrs. Crouch, sank down in a blaze, with a violent crash. She uttered a scream of terror. Providentially I was not hurt by the fall; and, catching her in my arms, scarcely knowing what I was doing, I carried her to the front of the stage, a considerable distance from the place where we fell. The applause was loud and continued; in fact, had we rehearsed the scene as it happened it could not have been done half so naturally or produced half so great an effect. I always carried her to the front of the stage in a similar manner, and it never failed to produce

great applause. Such are at times the effects of accident."

At the close of this season a second mishap of an even more alarming nature befell Mrs. Crouch. She was travelling, in order to fulfil some country engagement, when her carriage overturned, and a weighty dressing-case, containing all her stage ornaments and other theatrical property, fell on her throat, and nearly choked her. This accident severely injured her voice; for although the most eminent of the faculty were consulted, and various means tried to restore its clearness and strength, it never regained its former beauty. Henceforth she was obliged to take songs lower, and found her voice in speaking seriously weakened; nor did this misfortune come alone: her father was at this time confined to his bed with gout; her aunt was in a state of mental derangement; and her eldest sister, Mrs. Scadgell, was in a deep decline. Yet her cheerfulness enabled her to bear up against these troubles, and to preside with apparent ease and tranquillity at a table adorned almost nightly by the first and most brilliant characters of the age. Mrs. Scadgell died in 1796, leaving a son and a daughter in the care of Mrs. Crouch, who adopted and advanced them.

Some short time after this, Mrs. Crouch performed, as one of the Priestesses of the Sun, in Sheridan's *Pizarro*, a play so popular that on the first night the

pit was nearly filled by those who had paid box prices, and scrambled over to it from the suffocating lower boxes; many windows were broken to give air to the almost stifled throng in the passages; and one of the door-keepers had his ribs broken in endeavouring to restrain the impatience of the crowd. Late as the play came out, it ran thirty-one nights. The last new piece in which Mrs. Crouch appeared after *Pizarro* was the *Pavilion*, which was played only two nights. Mrs. Crouch was at this time engaged jointly with Kelly in the tuition of his pupils, who were instructed in deportment, acting, and elocution. Among them was a young girl named Griffiths, the daughter of the stage-door keeper in the Edinburgh Theatre. She was so struck with the performance of Mrs. Crouch, that shortly after that lady had quitted the city, she, without giving any intimation of her project to her father, set out from Edinburgh, and walked to London, where she sought out Mrs. Crouch, and entreated her to teach her to sing. Finding that the girl had a sweet voice, an accurate ear, and a great deal of intelligence, the kind-hearted prima donna took her under her tuition and patronage, and bestowed the utmost care on her instruction. The girl profited by the trouble expended on her, and made a decided "hit" as Polly and Clarissa, performing with Kelly, who took a strong interest in her.

In 1799, Mrs. Crouch and Kelly accepted an engage-

ment at the Plymouth Theatre from Mr. Foote, father of the lovely Miss Foote, of Covent Garden Theatre; the house was crowded every night by admiring auditors. One night, in *No Song no Supper*, Mrs. Crouch, who acted Margaretta, introduced a pretty ballad, composed by Dr. Arnold for Miss Leak, entitled "Poor Little Gipsy." It was everywhere a favourite, and she sang it exquisitely. A jolly tar in the pit listened with rapt attention, and when she came to the line "Spare a poor little gipsy a halfpenny," Jack halloed, "That I will, my darling!" and suited the action to the word by throwing a shilling on the stage.

Mrs. Crouch withdrew from the stage in 1801; but she occasionally exercised her skill in musical composition, and in sketching subjects for musical dramas. Her house adjoined the theatre, and she had a door of communication to her box; but she scarcely ever attended unless a new piece or a new performer interested her. She occupied much of her time and attention with the children of her sister Sophia, one of whom, Harry Horrebow, had appeared with credit on the stage. Her charms were now almost entirely faded, but this gave her no pangs of mortified vanity. "Oh," she would playfully remark, "I am not one of those ladies whose looking-glasses can never persuade them they are getting into years." And she would laughingly add, that on reflection she was "too old for characters of five-and-twenty."

Just before she left the stage she lost her father, who died April, 1801, aged seventy-two; and soon her own health began to fail. It was suspected that the overturning of her coach had produced some internal derangement, which eventually proved fatal. The sea air temporarily restored her; but she gradually sank under the effects of a painful disease.

She expired the 2nd October, 1805, in the forty-second year of her age. The injured wife had always spoken with the utmost kindness of Mr. Crouch. "I sincerely forgive the whole conduct of Mr. Crouch to myself," she often said; "he is older now, and I hope is sufficiently sensible of his errors to abjure them, and render the present object of his choice, who I hear is a deserving woman, far happier than he did me; and they may rest assured that I will never take the least step to interrupt their felicity." And to the last she continued to speak kindly of him, and never was heard to betray the slightest vindictive feeling. Just before her death she expressed a wish to be interred in Brighton churchyard, saying that as it pleased God she should die at Brighton she might be buried there: that "as the tree falls, there let it lie."

Michael Kelly placed a handsome monument, with a suitable inscription, over her grave. No one mourned the loss of the beautiful, amiable, and talented Anna Maria Crouch more than her faithful friend and com-

rade, Michael Kelly. In the course of his *Reminiscences*, he has given many tributes of admiration to that sweetness of nature which made her beloved in private life, and to her talents, which gained for her the enthusiastic plaudits of the most fastidious critics.

CHAPTER XII.

ANNA SELINA STORACE.

Nancy Storace,—her name was properly Anna Selina, but everybody called her Nancy,—was, like many of our great female singers, born in a "musical clique." Her father was a Neapolitan, named Sorace, and a good performer on the double bass; he had settled in London, where he played for many years at the Opera House, when it was led by Felice Giardini. He married one of the Miss Truslers, of Bath, "celebrated for making a peculiar sort of cake," Kelly tells us, "and sister to Dr. Trusler, well known in the literary world as a chronologist."

In partnership with Dr. Arnold and Lowe the singer, Storace opened Marylebone Gardens in 1769, for the performance of burlettas and other entertainments. There he produced, in 1771, a musical piece called the *Coquet* and a translation of *La Serva Padrona*. The speculation succeeded for a time, owing to the attractions of the music and Mrs. Storace's plum-cakes;

but after a while the directors began to squabble, and were obliged to give up their enterprise, with loss.

Nancy, the only daughter, was born in 1765. Lively and imitative, she displayed unusual talent at a very tender age, and at eight she could play and sing at sight. Her brother Stephen, who was just two years her senior, was even more clever, for he had a universal genius. "He was the most gifted creature I ever met with: an enthusiast and a genius," says Kelly; but he especially excelled in music and in painting. While Stephen and Nancy were little children, Sheridan came to lodge with their father in the winter of 1772, bringing his fair young bride, Miss Linley, from Bath, and, being doubtless introduced through the Truslers, commenced a friendship which always remained firm. Sheridan was delighted with the bright, clever boy, and declared afterwards, that if he had been bred to the law, he would indubitably have arrived at the dignity of Lord Chancellor. But as Stephen's father had more influence in the musical than in the legal world, he determined to educate the boy in his own profession, and sent him to the Conservatorio St. Onofrio, at Naples.

Nancy, evincing a decided taste for music, was trained as a singer, and had the good fortune to obtain the instruction of Rauzzini and Sacchini; she made such rapid progress under the care of these eminent masters, that papa took her to Naples, where

she sang at some of the oratorios given at the San Carlo during Lent. She was very well liked, and being now fifteen, it was decided that she should formally "come out." She had already sung as a juvenile performer at the meeting in Hereford in 1777, with her first master, Rauzzini.

They took her accordingly, about 1780, to Florence, where the famous Marchesi was engaged at the Pergola Theatre, and Nancy was engaged as "second woman" in the Opera. She had not, apparently, all the qualities necessary to ensure success to a female singer; there was an unpleasant "harshness" in her countenance, though her physiognomy was striking when lighted up by lively emotions; her figure was clumsy, her manner totally unfitted for serious opera, and there was a certain coarseness in her voice. Her natural style was, therefore, necessarily the comic, for which she had an innate humour; and she was an excellent actress; though her musical science was such that she could sing any kind of music.

Marchesi did not much like her, perhaps because she was not pretty; and soon they came to open warfare. It happened that Bianchi had composed for Marchesi the celebrated cavatina, "Sembianza amabile del mio bel sole." Marchesi sang this with exquisite taste, and in one of the passages he ran up a flight of semitone octaves, giving the last note with such tremendous power, that it become famous under the

title of "La bomba di Marchesi." Immediately after he sang this in the opera, Signora Storace had to sing an air of a similar character, and fired with emulation, she took it into her head that she would throw out "a bomba," and she executed her song with a brilliancy which amazed and enraptured the audience. Poor Marchesi was furious at being eclipsed, and indignant at anybody attempting even to rival him, more particularly the "second woman;" and Campigli, the impresario, requested her to discontinue the air. She peremptorily refused. "I have as good a right to show the power of my bomba as anybody else," was her reply. Marchesi declared that if she did not quit the theatre, he would; and the manager, fearing to lose a singer of celebrity like Marchesi, sided with the imperious signor; so poor Nancy was dismissed.

From Florence Nancy went, accompanied by her mother and brother, to Lucca, and thence to Leghorn; where she had scarcely arrived when she made an acquaintance which was destined to exercise some influence on her future life. She was standing with her brother on the Mole, at eight o'clock in the morning, when there approached a figure "slender as a walking-stick," attired in a Sicilian capote, with a quantity of fair hair floating over the shoulders, a face so delicately fair, and an appearance so peculiarly youthful, that the personage, whoever it might be, was evidently a girl dressed in boy's clothes. As the

slim form stepped lightly from the boat to the landing-place, Nancy and her brother began to laugh and make jocose remarks in English upon the supposed girl. They were very much disconcerted when, addressing Nancy in the same language, the wearer of the Sicilian capote and the flowing tresses, said: "You are mistaken, miss. I am a very proper *he* animal, and quite at your service." A ringing burst of laughter followed this speech; all three laughed till they were tired, and ultimately became fast friends. Stephen asked the stranger's name: it was Michael Kelly, who was coming in search of his first engagement, and they invited him to dinner.

The Signora Storace went shortly after to Venice, where she speedily became "the rage." She performed at the Theatre St. Samuele, in comic opera, with a powerful company. Every time she appeared the house overflowed; and when she took her benefit —the first ever given to any performer at Venice, and only granted to her because she was an Englishwoman—her mamma standing at the door to take the money, the delighted Venetians not only paid the usual entrance-money, but left all kinds of trinkets, chains, rings, and other acceptable trifles to be given to their favourite.

The Emperor Joseph hearing of the clever young vocalist, invited her to Vienna in 1784, at a salary of eight thousand ducats. The naïve, laughter-loving

girl was a great pet with his imperial majesty, despite her habit of committing some gaucherie in the etiquette of Court life, and involving herself in some ludicrous scrape. The Emperor himself, however, was noted for his oddities, and often made the most sober spectators indulge in a quiet titter; he was not therefore so easily disconcerted by his fair English friend as he might otherwise have been. One day the signora was riding in the Faubourg to witness a *fête*, when his imperial majesty rode up and asked if she was amused, inquiring if he could do anything for her? With her usual bluntness, Nancy took him at his word. "Why, sire," she said, in an off-hand manner, while those about her held their breath in dismay, "I am very thirsty. Will your majesty be so good as to order me a glass of water?" Joseph good-humouredly turned round, and directed one of his attendants to bring it.

About this time she involved herself in a mistake of a more serious nature. There was a certain Dr. Fisher, a violin-player, at the Court of Vienna, who was a most eccentric man, of very peculiar ideas, an inordinate prattler, and fond of relating of himself the most extraordinary things, which he expected everybody to believe implicitly. He was a preposterous coxcomb, and though disagreeably ugly, he fixed his eye on Nancy Storace, determining that she should be his second spouse. Of his character a just estimate might

be formed from an anecdote related of his conduct on one occasion at Covent Garden Theatre. In right of his first wife—the daughter of Mr. Powell—he was the possessor of a sixteenth share in the great London operatic establishment, and being one evening in the green-room, he rated an actress for having torn her petticoat. The actress questioned his right to do so. "All the right in the world, madam. I have to look after my property," he replied, loftily. "For know, madam, the sixteenth of the petticoat which you have destroyed belonged to me, and is mine, to all intents and purposes."

This conceited individual laid such close siege to the heart of poor Nancy that she was fain to capitulate. By dint of prodigious perseverance, and frequently taking tea with her mamma, he persuaded the young lady that he was one of the nicest fellows in the universe, and that she could not do better than accept his hand and heart, and share his musical fame. Nancy was bewitched: her friends remonstrated in vain, and she became Mrs. Fisher. The marriage ceremony was performed by a Protestant German clergyman in the chapel of the Dutch ambassador. Dr. Adam Auersperg and Lord Mount Edgecumbe led the bride to the altar; and the wedding breakfast was given by the English Minister, Sir Robert Keith, whose proxy was the music-loving earl.

Scarcely was she married, than she repented of her

rashness. She and her *caro sposo* spent their entire leisure in fighting — literally, not figuratively; the doctor, it was said, making no scruple of enforcing his arguments with his young bridê by a word and a blow, the blow coming first. One of her friends went to the Emperor—the good-natured Joseph—and detailed this unfortunate concatenation of circumstances; whereupon his majesty significantly suggested to the doctor that travel sometimes enlarges the ideas. The violinist prudently took the broad hint in good part, and repaired to Ireland; where, being much admired for his skill on the violin, he supported himself by teaching and playing at concerts.

During the visit of the Duke of York to Vienna, Stephen Storace produced his first opera, in which his sister, who had now resumed her maiden name, and Michael Kelly took the leading parts. In the middle of the first act, Signora Storace suddenly lost her voice, and she in vain strove to recover herself: she could not force a note. This made her wretched, not only on her own account, but because it caused the failure of the opera. There is little doubt that the loss of her voice was occasioned by nervous excitement consequent upon her rash and unhappy marriage.

For five months she had no voice, and she was beginning to despair of its return, when all at once she discovered to her great joy that she could carol in her old bird-like tones. In a delirium of delight she

ran to inform her brother of the fact. His second opera, the *Equivoci*, adapted by Da Ponte from the *Comedy of Errors*, was put in rehearsal without delay; and the elated singer made her brother ample amends for her former unlooked-for failure. This opera had a long and brilliant run, and established the musical reputation of Stephen at Vienna.

Some time after this, Stephen Storace left Vienna for England, returning in 1787, with an engagement for Nancy from Gallini (then manager of the Opera House in London), as prima donna for the comic opera. Her engagement at Vienna was to expire after the ensuing Carnival, and she gladly accepted this offer of appearing in London. Kelly resolved to leave Vienna likewise, and waited on the Emperor at Schönbrunn, from whom he obtained permission to depart. The same night he went to the Ridotto Rooms, and was induced, contrary to his usual habit, to join in some play going forward. He lost forty zecchinos to a gallant English colonel, and having only twenty in his pocket, was obliged to promise to pay the other twenty in the course of the week. His folly came to the ears of Nancy, and the next morning she called on him very early. "So, sir," she said, with a severe countenance, "I hear you were gambling last night, and not only lost all the money you had about you, but are still in debt. Such debts ought not to be left unsatisfied a moment. You may one day or other go

to England, and should the transaction of your playing for more than you possess become known among the English, it might give you a character which I know you do not deserve. It must be settled directly." She drew the twenty zecchinos from her pocket, and told him to go at once and discharge the obligation. "Such an act of well-timed, disinterested friendship was noble," said Kelly years after, "and never has been forgotten by me."

Everything was arranged for their departure, when, four days before the appointed time, a slight *contretemps* nearly broke up the plans of the party. Some friends supped with Kelly and Stephen at the Ridotto Rooms, and the latter, though habitually sober, drank too much champagne. From the supper-table they adjourned to the ball-room, where they saw Nancy Storace dancing with an officer in full uniform, booted and spurred; while waltzing, the officer's spurs entangled in Nancy's dress, and he fell, with his fair partner, to the ground, "to the great amusement of the bystanders." Stephen, fancying his sister had been intentionally insulted, flew at the officer, whom he furiously attacked, and the uproar and confusion ended by half-a-dozen *gendarmes* seizing Stephen and dragging him to the guard-house. Several English gentlemen who were present followed him; and the officer of the guard, being a good-natured man, allowed them to send for anything they chose; so the

party remained with the prisoner all night, making his durance as pleasant as possible under the circumstances.

The next evening, Kelly placed himself in the corridor leading from the dining-room to the Emperor's study. Joseph, passing through, in his usual custom, saw Kelly, and paused, saying, "Why, O'Kelly, I thought you were off to England." "I can't go, sire. My friend who was to travel with me, was last night put in prison." And he related the unfortunate affair. The Emperor laughed. "I am sorry for Storace," said he, "for he is a man of great talent; but I regret to observe that some of the English gentry who travel appear much altered from what they used to be. Formerly, they travelled after they had quitted college—it appears to me that now they travel before they go to it. *Bon voyage*, O'Kelly," he added, passing on; "I shall give directions that Storace may be set at liberty."

Anna Storace made her first appearance at the King's Theatre with Signor Borelli—a basso of remarkable talent—in Paesiello's comic opera, *Gli Schiave per Amore*, as Gelinda. Her performance in this opera established her reputation; and her success was so great that she determined on settling in England. Sometimes she appeared alone, sometimes she was called in to give additional strength to a particular opera; as in Martini's *Arbore di Diana*, with Fabrizi, Viganoni,

Braham, and Morelli, and in *La Cosa Rara*, when Mrs. Billington was substituted for Fabrizi.

Stephen had the direction of the Italian Opera for a short time, and gained considerable applause for the manner in which he produced the first piece in which his sister appeared. But his ardent, open nature soon revolted against the petty intrigues and jealousies of the green-room, so he gave up in disgust his musical pursuits, and went to Bath, where he devoted himself to drawing, in which art he excelled.

Signora Storace sang at the Ancient Concerts at the end of the year, and on the 8th of December the King's Theatre opened under the direction of Mazzinghi, with a new comic opera by Paesiello, *Il Rè Teodora in Venezia*, in which Signora Storace, Signora Sestini, and Signor Morelli supported the principal characters. Morelli had a bass voice of a fine rich mellow quality, and was an excellent actor.

The engagement of Mara and Rubinelli having terminated, and the latter quitting England, the season of 1788 began with comic opera, in which Signora Storace took the lead. Benucci was the first buffo, but his fine bass voice, excellent acting, and undoubted talent were not enough to make him a popular favourite. In the following season, the comic performers were dismissed, and exchanged for a new set, "all execrable." The dancers, too, were so bad that loud dissatisfaction was expressed every night, and the manager was at

last compelled to send to Paris for a better corps de ballet, with whom came the famous Mdlle. Guimard, then, it was whispered, nearly sixty years of age, but who looked a charming sprite before the lamps. Signora Storace then transferred her services to Drury Lane, where she was received gladly as a most effective burletta singer. She was a valuable addition to any theatrical establishment, even apart from her talents, for she was never more happy than when attending to her professional duties. She defied colds and nervous complaints, wearing strong "shoes in the dry and pattens in the wet" to and from the theatre.

The first comic singer, Signora Giuliani, not having pleased the public, Signora Storace was re-engaged in 1789 at the King's Theatre, and appeared on the 11th June, in Paesiello's comic opera, *Il Barbiere di Seviglia*, as Rosina. She sang the airs with great taste and animation, and was ably supported by the spirit and humour of Signor Roselli, who made his first appearance as Figaro.

She returned to Drury Lane the next season, when the *Haunted Tower* was produced on the 24th November, 1789. Stephen Storace (having returned to the theatre) composed the music, for the copyright of which he received five hundred pounds. The cast was good: Lord William, Michael Kelly; Edward, Mr. Bannister; Lady Elinor, Mrs. Crouch; Adela, Signora Storace. Baddeley, Moody, Suett, Dignum, Sedgwick,

also combined to add to the attractions. The success of this piece was wonderful; it continued to "draw" for fifty nights, and was for a long time afterwards a favourite.

The next year, the charming little operetta, *No Song no Supper*, by Prince Hoare, was brought out for the benefit of Kelly; in which Signora Storace acted Margaretta, and made a great "hit." She was admirable as an actress, though her imperfect knowledge of the English language was against her; but for this defect she amply atoned by her vivacity and arch humour, though her manner was a little vulgar. Her ballad, "With lowly suit" (the melody of which was taken from an old street ditty), was so admired as to be always honoured with a unanimous encore. The operetta was received with great applause, and remained for years a favourite with the public; being also remarkable as the only entertainment on the stage in which real edibles were provided; for no matter where it was played, a veritable leg of mutton invariably figured on the table.

This season there were oratorios at both the winter theatres. Those at Drury Lane began on Friday, February 19th, with the *Messiah*, which was admirably sung by Reinhold and Kelly, Mrs. Crouch and Signora Storace.

The *Siege of Belgrade* was produced January 1, 1791; Signora Storace, Kelly, Bannister, junior, and Mrs.

Crouch appearing in it. This opera presented a marked instance of the rapid transition which English opera had made "from the simplicity of the musical farce to the captivating splendours of the Italian drama." The copyright was sold for a thousand pounds. In 1792, *The Pirates*, an opera by Stephen Storace, in which he introduced some of the music from the *Equivoci*, was produced. The scenery was designed by Stephen himself, from sketches made at Naples.

In March, 1796, Stephen Storace, when actively engaged in the production of the *Iron Chest*, was suddenly attacked by gout, and his anxiety to see the piece produced properly was so intense that, against the entreaties of his wife and best friends, he insisted on going to see the last rehearsal. Wrapped up in blankets, he was carried in a sedan-chair to the cold stage of the theatre, where he remained to the end of the rehearsal, after which he returned to his bed, from which he never rose again. He died on the 19th of the month, at the early age of thirty-three, leaving several children and a widow, daughter of Mr. Hall, the engraver. Deeply regretted by his friends, their first thought was to provide as far as possible for the helpless ones he had left, and a benefit was given on the 30th, when the incomplete opera of *Mahmoud* was performed, with the consent of Hoare, the librettist; some additional music having been selected by the composer's sister, to render the work presentable.

England became insupportable to Signora Storace after the death of her brother; so, resigning her lucrative engagement at Drury Lane, she accompanied Braham on a musical tour in 1797.

They first visited Paris, where they intended to have made only a brief sojourn, but finding themselves petted, applauded, and besieged with entreaties to stay, they consented to give a series of concerts. Tickets were issued at the novel price of one louis; a sum never before given at any concert in the then fashionable republic, the general price being six livres; but notwithstanding the increased price of the tickets, their performances brought together numerous and elegant audiences; and they remained eight months in Paris, which they at length left with difficulty. They then went to Turin, Milan, Venice, Florence, Leghorn, Genoa, and many other cities; meeting everywhere with success beyond their most sanguine expectations.

After four years of this wandering life, they returned to England on the urgent entreaties of Mr. Harris, who made them offers impossible to resist, and on December 9th, 1801, they appeared in the opera of *Chains of the Heart*, which had been manufactured by Prince Hoare out of several popular dramas. The marked contempt evinced by the audience for this "tissue of nonsense and folly" agitated Signora Storace to such a degree that she was nearly deprived of her powers. She recovered herself, however, and

went through her part with her "usual ability and archness," though the critics objected that the character was too "genteel" for her style. Braham was "prodigiously impressive," according to the theatrical critics of the day, displaying not only a voice of exquisite sweetness and flexibility, but wonderful taste and executive skill. The new style which he had adopted during his absence from England was not at first generally popular; the public were not accustomed to the profusion of embellishment with which he embroidered even the most simple airs; indeed, he himself did not admire the florid style, though he assisted to make it fashionable.

In February, the following year, Braham's popular opera, *The Cabinet*, was brought out, in which Storace appeared (as Floretta) with Braham and Incledon; and on the 15th March, she took her benefit (at Covent Garden), when the *Siege of Belgrade* and *No Song no Supper* were performed to an overflowing house.

In 1803, Harris, the spirited proprietor of Covent Garden, produced on the 13th December a new comic opera by Dibdin and Braham, called the *English Fleet in* 1342. The airs which were sung by Signora Storace and Braham were not so effective as those of *The Cabinet*, and the *English Fleet* had to encounter a tempest of opposition at its launch; "but through the skill of its pilot, Mr. Harris, it was at length brought into safe and secure anchorage, where with

flying colours it afterwards rode in triumph." For this piece Braham received the largest sum that had ever been paid for the copyright of a musical drama—one thousand guineas.

A violent dispute arose between Braham and the manager when Signora Storace took her benefit, April 1st, 1805, originating in the refusal of the manager to give Braham the privilege of selecting songs for the night's programme. This refusal the tenor chose to regard in the light of an insult, and, after some altercation, sent in his resignation; but that the signora might not suffer, he appeared that evening in the *Siege of Belgrade*. The public took up the quarrel, and marshalled itself into two parties. The house was crowded, and the instant the popular tenor appeared on the stage, the uproar began, and the clamour became so deafening that it was in vain Braham attempted to make himself audible. Wearied with their own noise, the rioters at last desisted, and consented to hear what Braham had to say. He stated that it had been hitherto the custom to allow him the privilege he had claimed, and he had exercised it without opposition, having always taken what songs he pleased from any operas he liked, to introduce them in any piece for his benefit. That this established custom having now for the first time been refused by the manager, he could only consider such refusal as personal to himself, and that he felt

proportionately hurt, not from being denied the privilege, but from the abrupt withdrawal. An explanation from the opposition was then vehemently demanded, and some one came forward to offer an apology; but Kemble, as acting manager, was violently called for. He was not in the house, nor was it known where he was to be found. However, the audience insisted that he should appear.

After some delay Mr. Kemble came on, and stated that Mr. Braham might have been permitted to take whatever songs he pleased from pieces that were not now on the stock-list, but not from those which still brought money to the theatre. The audience at last allowed the opera to proceed.

During the latter part of this summer, Signora Storace and Braham were engaged to perform six nights at the Brighton Theatre. In the rehearsal of their first opera, the *Haunted Tower*, when Braham's leading song, "Spirit of my sainted sire," came on, it was discovered that there were no kettle-drums; and as the absence of the drum accompaniment would completely ruin the song, the manager faithfully promised that the drums should be behind the scenes in the evening. At night, the drums were at hand, but there was no one to beat them! Braham and the manager were in despair, as the song was to be given immediately. Storace, who was standing by, seized the drumsticks, and, with her usual merry manner,

undertook to beat the drums; a task which she performed as if she had been a drummer all her life.

From various reasons Signora Storace resolved to quit the stage in 1808; she was aware that her voice was of a nature to crack and grow husky, and she had made enough to retire on in comfort. On the 30th of May she appeared for the last time on the stage, in her favourite part of Margaretta, in *No Song no Supper*. Colman wrote for her a farewell address of about two dozen lines, which she sang in that character, thus making "a swanlike end, fading in music." Her emotion was visibly perceptible, and was more than her strength could bear; when she reached the line, "Farewell, and bless you all for ever!" she was so overcome by her feelings that she was borne senseless from the stage. She quitted the stage esteemed and regretted by all Opera frequenters; and withdrew altogether into private life, reserving her inimitable powers for the amusement of her friends. She was visited in her retirement by a large circle of noble and fashionable acquaintances, for she enjoyed a considerable income, was luxurious in her habits, intelligent and agreeable, and considerably accomplished. Every year she gave a *fête*, "to which the love of whim drew some, and the folly of fashion drew others."

Seven years after her retirement Signora Storace was dining with her old friend Kelly, who had invited Signor Ambrogetti and another friend to meet her,

when suddenly she was seized with a shivering fit, and complained of being very ill. The next day Dr. Hooper advised her to be bled; but this she vehemently refused, because it was Friday, her superstitious feelings making her regard it as an unlucky omen. It may fairly be said that she sacrificed herself to this superstition, for it was confidently asserted that had she lost blood her life might have been saved. She died at her country house at Herne Hill, at the age of forty-nine, May, 1815, of dropsy of long standing.

Her generosities were as numerous as her eccentricities. She left a legacy of a thousand pounds to the Royal Society of Musicians. She had already contributed largely towards erecting in the Abbey Church, at Bath, a monument to her old master, the celebrated Rauzzini.

Mrs BILLINGTON.

Engraved by J. C. Armytage from a Mezzotint after Downman.

CHAPTER XIII.

ELIZABETH BILLINGTON.

One of the leading performers in the orchestra of our Italian Opera, about the middle of the last century, was a native of Saxony, named Charles Weichsel. His wife (whose maiden name was Wierman) was a leading vocalist at Vauxhall, who appeared at the Hereford Musical Meeting in 1768 and 1769. She had been a pupil of John Christian Bach, who came to England in 1763, and her talents were highly appreciated by the frequenters of Vauxhall, where she sang from 1765 to 1775. Her voice was of unusual compass, reaching to the E in alt., and it had one striking peculiarity—an approximation to the tone of a clarionet, from which instrument she had studied her solfeggio. Her facility of execution was singular, her style was elegant and florid, and she had attained a remarkable neatness in staccato passages, in which she rivalled the pizzicato of the best violinists of the day. The only

defect in her otherwise mellow voice was a certain reediness of tone.*

This musical couple had two children, a girl, born in 1770, in Litchfield Street, Soho, named Elizabeth, and a son named Charles. Both were clever and sprightly, and displayed a genuine love of music, they studied together, and were very much attached; but the girl's taste turned towards singing and pianoforte performance, and the boy's towards the violin. Elizabeth, whose general musical education was superintended by her father, with a severity amounting to harshness, received instruction from her father's countryman, Schroeter, and occasionally from some of the first masters of the time, who were astonished at her rapid progress and early proficiency: lessons, which to others would have been tasks, were with her mere pastime. At the age of seven she assisted at her mother's benefit at the little theatre in the Haymarket, singing and playing on the piano in a way that surprised every one. Her brother Charles also played

* "Mrs. Weichsel imitated the tones of her husband's hautboy till she contracted a reedy tone. I mentioned the circumstance one day to Mrs. Billington, at Fulham, when, taking me to the window, and pointing to an old gentleman, who was walking at the farther end of the garden, 'Yondér,' she said, 'is the cause. The applause with which my father's excellence on his favourite instrument (the hautboy) was uniformly received, led my mother to copy its tones till she lost her own. Sensible of her mistake, I have always preferred to emulate, with what success I know not, the more liquid notes of the flute.'"—Busby.

a solo on the violin, in a style which delighted and astonished the public, always ready to welcome juvenile phenomena.

Elizabeth, when she was only eleven, composed original pieces for the pianoforte; and at fourteen, when others were beginning to study, she appeared at a concert at Oxford. As she grew older, she continued her pianoforte studies under the care of Mr. Thomas Billington, one of the band belonging to Drury Lane. He was a clever, pleasant man; she was young and lovely, with bewitching manners; they were both young and deplorably poor, but they were romantic, and papa was unbearably severe and irritating. The natural consequence was, that they were married at Lambeth Church, at the beginning of 1785, in direct opposition to the wishes of Elizabeth's parents.

Too soon the young pair found themselves in a sad predicament. They had no money, and were at their wit's end; so, pressed by necessity, they went on a journey of speculation to Dublin, where they succeeded in obtaining engagements at the theatre in Smock Alley, from Richard Daly. Mrs. Billington made her first appearance on the lyric stage at the age of fifteen in Glück's Opera of *Orpheus and Eurydice*, with the celebrated Tenducci. Tenducci was a very fine singer, and a popular favourite. In 1766 he had delighted the Dublin public by his performance as Arbaces, and his

exquisite singing of the air "Water parted from the Sea," in *Artaxerxes*. At his benefits he used to obtain thirty, forty, and fifty guineas for a single ticket. The "frolicsome Dublin boys" sang about the streets, in his honour, this stanza, to the old tune of "Over the hills and far away."

> "Tenducci was a piper's son,
> And he was in love when he was young,
> And all the tunes that he could play,
> Was 'Water parted from the say!'"

Unfortunately, the aspiring young vocalist, Mrs. Billington, was doomed to disappointment and mortification, for the audience infinitely preferred a Miss Wheeler, and always applauded her, taking no notice of the new-comer. This was very vexatious, but her annoyances did not cease here. Daly, the manager, —they called him "Dick the Dasher,"—was an intolerable tyrant, and ground down his wretched company in order to keep his carriage and squander money on his own pleasures. Brutal and overbearing, he was constantly exacting forfeits on every imaginable pretence. Another uncomfortable circumstance was that every performer, however respectable, on going to receive the week's salary, was obliged to stand on a dismal narrow staircase which led to the office, huddled together with the lamplighters, scene-shifters, carpenters, tailors, and supernumeraries, the latter being frequently so distressed as to be driven to stealing

the clothes of the performers. Daly was continually threatening, on the slightest pretext, to throw performers into prison, in order to bully them into yielding to his schemes, or to take revenge for imaginary offences.

Disgusted by the annoyances to which she was subjected, the timid débutante almost relinquished the stage in despair; but another engagement was obtained for her at the Capel Street Theatre, then under the management of Signor Giordani. About the end of this summer, a girl was born to the young couple, but it did not live long.

Mrs. Billington left Dublin, and went to Waterford with her husband, who was engaged in the orchestra of the theatre there. It happened that the company were getting up some difficult musical performance, and wanted a female voice; so, seizing the auspicious opportunity, Billington asked permission to bring his wife: a request which astonished everybody, for till that moment no one had heard of her. She was introduced, and took by storm those of the actors who listened to her, for she united to great musical science rare natural gifts as a vocalist; her beauty, too, was of a brilliant type, and altogether she created a "sensation" among the performers. John Bernard, the actor, who entertained a lively friendship for Billington, volunteered to give the young singer any assistance or advice in studying one or two characters;

and after the lapse of a few mornings she was perfect not only in the words but the characters of Rosetta and Clarissa. A full rehearsal was called, and the only objection raised against her was, that timidity almost paralyzed her powers: this explained the secret of her failure in Dublin. However, after some further rehearsals, she gained such confidence that the manager put her name in the bills, and she appeared in public. Her success "was equal to her deserts;" yet at the conclusion of the season, she was without an engagement. Her husband being in the same predicament, went to Bernard, and begged him to use his influence with Mr. Palmer, of the Bath Theatre, in procuring him a situation. Bernard received for answer that the arrangements for the orchestra had been long since completed, but that if the young couple chose to join the company under the condition of making themselves generally useful, Palmer would give them three guineas a week. Billington, of course, gladly received the offer; but circumstances induced the pair to return to Dublin, where Mrs. Billington sang again at the Rotunda with some success; they then went to London.

Mrs. Billington, who now felt confident in her powers, applied to Harris, the proprietor, and Lewis, the manager, of Covent Garden, for an engagement. They replied that if she liked to perform three nights, they would be willing to give her a trial; but so short a probation frightened her. She desired to have thirteen

nights, under the reasonable apprehension that, as in Ireland, over-anxiety might, at first, mar her efforts; and this was agreed to. She demanded twelve pounds a week, to which they demurred, that being the highest sum then given to Miss Wheeler, Mrs. Billington's Dublin rival, who was then at Covent Garden, and whose reputation was established. The comparison irritated Mrs. Billington, and she was about to decline further negotiations, but prudently changed her mind; and her name was announced as "Mrs. Billington, late Miss Weichsel." It happened to attract the attention of the King, who commanded her appearance two days sooner than it had been advertised. This circumstance, so highly flattering, encouraged the trembling débutante, who resolved to stake everything on her present chance, and to quit the stage if she failed.

Nature and study had both combined to make Mrs. Billington ready to profit by those "lucky chances," of which people talk so much, and which never avail grumblers and idlers; and she laboured day and night to ensure her success. The compass of her voice—a pure soprano, more sweet than powerful—was of extraordinary extent in its upper notes, from A to A in alt; but the lower part was very limited. Of this she was aware, and, in a bravura she would often substitute one octave for another, a licence which passed unnoticed by the undiscriminating multitude, while it was easily excused by

cultivated ears, being, as one connoisseur remarked, "Like the wild luxuriance of poetical imagery, which, though against the cold rules of the critic, constitutes the true value of poetry." She had not the full tones of Banti, but rather resembled those of Allegranti, whom she closely imitated. Her voice, in its very high tones, was something of the quality of a flute or flageolet, or resembled a commixture of the finest sounds of the flute and violin, if such could be imagined. It was then "wild and wandering," but of singular sweetness. "Its agility," says Mount Edgecumbe, "was very great, and everything she sang was executed in the neatest manner, and with the utmost precision. Her knowledge of music enabled her to give great variety to her embellishments, which, as her taste was always good, were always judicious." In her cadenzas, however, she was obliged to trust to her memory, for she never could improvise an ornament. Her ear was so delicate that she could instantly detect any instrument out of tune in a large orchestra;* and her intonation was perfect. In manner she was "peculiarly bewitching," and her attitudes generally were good, with the exception of an ugly habit of pressing her hands against her bosom when executing difficult passages. Her face and figure were beautiful, and her countenance was full of good-humour, though

* Her sense of hearing was so painfully acute, that she was often seriously annoyed by the sound made by small flies in a room.

not susceptible of varied expression: indeed, as an actress she had comparatively little talent, depending chiefly on her voice for producing effect on the stage.

On the 13th of February, 1786, in the presence of the King and Queen, and before a house crowded by fashion, Mrs. Billington made her début at Covent Garden, in the character of Rosetta, in *Love in a Village*, which she had studied so assiduously with her friend Bernard in Waterford. Her success was beyond her most sanguine anticipations. It was declared that Rosetta had never had so able a representative. She sang in a resplendently brilliant style; brilliancy being then an innovation in English singing, for the once celebrated Catley thought one cadenza enough in each verse, and Mrs. Bannister scarcely ever used any ornament whatever, her style being purely that of ballad-singing. The innovation was considered dangerous, and it was said the presence of royalty alone shielded the young vocalist from disapprobation. The pit was bewildered; the gallery gaped in sheer amazement; but the musical world unanimously applauded, and the effect produced in the orchestra by her performance was magnetic; the leader being so absorbed during one of her beautiful cadences that he neglected to give his chord at its close. So much science, taste, flexibility, bird-like sweetness, and brilliancy had not been united in any preceding singer. Miss Wheeler

was routed, and Mrs. Billington assumed undisputed sovereignty in the realm of song.

At the expiration of the twelve nights the managers waited on the successful débutante to renew the engagement; and questioned her cautiously regarding her expectations. More in jest than earnest, for she hardly credited her triumph, she demanded a thousand pounds and a benefit for the remainder of the season; and to her utter astonishment the managers gladly assented. So great was their satisfaction, indeed, that at the end of the season they voluntarily gave her a second night, in return for the extraordinary emoluments they had derived from her performances.

For her second part she chose Polly, in the *Beggars' Opera*, and in music of a simpler character proved that she was mistress of every style, and had that judgment so rare in a singer—to discern the true limit of embellishment.

She appeared at the Ancient Concerts immediately after making her début, and sang, "Come rather, Goddess, sad and holy," from Handel's *L'Allegro ed il Penseroso*, and "Dove sei" (from *Rodelinda*), now better known as "Holy, holy Lord." Mara, who was then in the zenith of her fame, was seized with a furious jealousy of the rising young vocalist, and evidenced her smothered rage by disputing with her for places and pre-eminence. Mrs. Billington, being very good-tempered, never resisted the haughty German, but took

every opportunity, on the contrary, to speak of her in flattering terms.

During the season, although her theatrical duties were unremitting, Mrs. Billington never relaxed from the most sedulous pursuit of the general knowledge and practice of her art. She laboured incessantly, and received lessons of Mortellari, an Italian master of celebrity at that time in England. The pianoforte occupied a good deal of her attention; and so exquisite was her touch that Salomon used to say of her, "Sare, she sings wit her fingers." Had she devoted herself to the piano instead of to vocal art she would have been the most celebrated pianist of her day; but she was eagerly intent on becoming a finished singer. Often would she go from the theatre to her master, never tiring, and determined on leaving nothing to chance, the god of fools. So much were the public struck by the novelty and singular beauty of her vocal graces and ornaments that her favourite songs were published as nearly as possible in the way she sang them, her fioriture being exactly taken down. Her husband was intoxicated with her success, and took care that nothing should be neglected to give effect to her performance. One night when she was singing the bravura in the last act of *Artaxerxes*, her husband, who was seated in the orchestra, considering that the trumpeter did not accompany her with sufficient force, whispered frequently to him, "Louder!—louder!" The leader

of the band, agreeing with Billington, repeated the same command so often that at length the indignant German, flinging down his trumpet in a rage, turned to the audience, and exclaimed, in a tone of angry remonstrance, "It be vary easy to say, 'Louder and louderer,' but, by gar! vere is de vind?"

On the theatre closing, Mrs. Billington availed herself of the interval to visit Paris, Billington remaining in London, teaching music, and living splendidly on the joint earnings of himself and spouse. She also seized the opportunity of obtaining instruction from Sacchini; neglecting no means of fortifying and enriching her natural endowments with the aid of science. From him she quickly caught "much of that pointed expression, neatness of execution, and nameless grace by which her performance was so happily distinguished:" indeed, she may be said to have been the last pupil of that master, for he died soon after.

The next year Kelly appeared, when he saw Mrs. Billington perform Rosetta. "I thought her an angel in beauty, and the St. Cecilia of song," says he, enthusiastically. It having become "the fashion" to translate popular French pieces for the English stage, an operetta, founded on Sterne's story of "Maria," was produced at Covent Garden, April 24th, this year, under the title of *Nina*, with the original music by Dalayrac, the words having been adapted by Dr. Walcot (Peter Pindar). Mrs. Billington performed Nina with

great feeling and expression, and was loudly applauded. She performed at Covent Garden for several seasons.

In the summer of 1789 she went to Dublin, when she sang with Miss George, afterwards Lady Oldmixon. This singer's voice was of such compass that it reached B in alto perfectly clear and in tune, being three notes higher than any other singer. "Mrs. Billington, who was engaged on very high terms for a limited number of nights, made her first appearance on the Dublin stage in the character of Polly in the *Beggar's Opera*, surrounded by her halo of popularity. She was received with acclamations, and sang her songs delightfully; particularly 'Cease your funning,' which was tumultuously encored. Miss George, who performed the part of Lucy (an up-hill singing part), perceiving that she had little chance of dividing the applause with the great magnet of the night, had recourse to the following stratagem. When the dialogue duet in the second act, 'Why, how now, Madam Flirt?' came on," Mrs. Billington having given her verse with exquisite sweetness, Miss George, "setting propriety at defiance, sang the whole of her verse an octave higher, her tones having the effect of the high notes of a sweet and brilliant flute. The audience, taken by surprise, bestowed on her such loud applause as almost shook the walls of the theatre, and a unanimous encore was the result."

Many persons having said that it was only in bravura

singing that she was a proficient, Mrs. Billington selected for her benefit on the 19th February, 1790, the musical piece of the *Flitch of Bacon*, the first opera composed by Shield. As Eliza, she sang with touching effect the simple and plaintive melodies in the most chaste and beautiful style, thus silencing those who had limited the range of her talents.

Haydn gave this opinion on her in his *Diary* in 1791: "On the 10th of December I went to see the opera of *The Woodman* (by Shield). It was on the day when the provoking memoir of Mrs. Billington was published. She sang rather timidly, but yet well. She is a great genius." The tenor was Incledon. "The common people in the gallery are very troublesome in every theatre, and take lead in uproar. The audience in the pit and boxes have often to clap a long time before they can get a fine part repeated. It was so this evening with the beautiful duet in the third act: nearly a quarter of an hour was spent in contention, but at length the pit and boxes gained the victory, and the duet was repeated. The two actors stood anxiously on the stage all the while."

The great composer paid her one of the prettiest compliments she ever received. Reynolds was painting her portrait in the character of St. Cecilia, and one day Haydn called, just as it was being finished. Haydn contemplated the picture very attentively, then said suddenly, "But you have made a great mistake."

The painter started up aghast—"How! What?" "Why," said Haydn, "you have represented Mrs. Billington listening to the angels: you should have made the angels listening to her!" Mrs. Billington blushed with pleasure. "Oh, you dear man!" cried she, throwing her arms round his neck and kissing him.

Early in 1794 she quitted England, having resolved to abandon the stage, and went with her husband and brother Charles, the violinist, on a continental tour. Charles's excellent taste, and the discrimination of his style of accompaniment, were said to have contributed not a little to set off Mrs. Billington's talents to the best advantage. Intending to travel incognito, they declined the letters of introduction offered by friends; but two days after they reached Naples a *valet-de-place* betrayed Mrs. Billington's name to Lady Hamilton, who immediately called on the great English singer, and insisted on presenting her to the Queen. She was then persuaded to perform in private, accompanied by Mr. Weichsel, before the King and Queen at Caserta, their country residence; and so gratified were their Majesties by her performance that they requested her to appear at the San Carlo, then looked on as the finest operatic establishment in the world. It is difficult to refuse royal requests; and accordingly, in May, 1794, she made her début before the Neapolitans in *Inez di Castro*, which had been specially set for her by Francis Bianchi. Her success was complete.

To *Inez di Castro* succeeded the *Didone* of Paisiello, the *Ero e Leandro* of Paer, and the *Deborah e Sisera* (an oratorio, or rather sacred drama) of Guglielmi. In the latter Mrs. Billington was supported by Davide, the most celebrated tenor of Italy, who had a pretty good opinion of his own abilities. Speaking one day of Braham, he declared that there were only two real singers in the world—himself and "the Englishman."

It became the vogue to patronize the beautiful English donna, from national pride as well as from personal admiration. The royal example was followed by Lady Templeton, Lady Palmerston, Lady Gertrude Villiers, Lady Grandison, and all the English and Irish nobility then resident in Naples who either affected or possessed musical taste.

She went in June, 1796, to Bologna, where she found herself unexpectedly singing to an audience consisting of French officers and soldiers, whom the rapid victories of Napoleon had led in less than two months across the whole of Northern Italy from the Varennes to the Adige. Bonaparte himself arrived in Bologna on the 19th of June, and learning that Mrs. Billington had an engagement at Milan, a city already occupied by his troops, he assured her not only of perfect security, but that Madame Bonaparte would pay her every attention in her power; during her engagement at the Pergola, therefore, Mrs. Billington was a frequent guest at the table and private parties of Josephine.

From Milan she proceeded to Venice, where she was engaged to sing during the Carnival of 1796. Nasolini, a young composer of great promise, wrote *Semiramide* for her début. She sang only one night, however, being suddenly seized by severe illness, which confined her for six months to her bed. To the honour of the impresario be it said that he generously brought her the whole of her salary, which she recompensed by singing without any further remuneration during the season of the Ascension, on the occasion when the annual fair drew immense numbers of strangers to Venice. On her recovery, the theatre was illuminated for three nights, and the *corps diplomatique* presented her with a jewel of great price and beauty. On going from Venice to Rome, she was earnestly requested to give a concert in the Eternal City; she at first declined, but the society of Cavalieri undertook the arrangements, and she and her brother Charles performed to a crowded audience. She returned to Naples at the close of this year; and as about this time an eruption of Mount Vesuvius took place, the superstitious bigotry of the Neapolitans attributed the visitation to the permission granted to the heretic Englishman to perform at the San Carlo. Serious apprehensions were entertained by Mrs. Billington's friends for her safety; but her talents and popularity triumphed, and she continued to appear.

Her engagement was terminated in a most melan-

choly manner. She and her husband were dining one evening with the Bishop of Winchester (North), who was then staying at Naples. After dinner, Mr. Billington went upstairs to fetch a cloak for his wife to go to the Opera; while coming back, he suddenly fell dead in the arms of his friend Bianchi. The consternation which his mysterious death created may readily be imagined. Many persons shook their heads and whispered that he had died from poison or the stiletto; Mrs. Billington having been the object of the devoted attentions of all the young nobles of Naples, horrible stories were industriously circulated. It is said that they feared to tell Mrs. Billington, and that she sang at the theatre that night; but such an assertion is scarcely to be credited. The Queen of Naples interfered to prevent her reappearing until she had completely recovered the shock.

A servant of the public has not much time to devote to grief; and there were only too many reasons for supposing that Elizabeth Billington did not particularly regret the husband with whom she had eloped in her girlish years. Having, by the irruption of the French army, lost twenty thousand sequins which she had placed in the bank of Venice, she was glad to take an engagement from the proprietors of La Scala, and left Naples to fulfil it.

She had not been long at Milan when she became acquainted with a Frenchman, the son of a banker of

Lyons, and employed in the commissariat department; he was named Felican, Felissant, Fleissont, Felisson, Felissent, Felissini, Florresent, or Felipent: for thus variously has the name been spelt. He was a remarkably handsome man, in the prime of life, of fine athletic form, military appearance, and seemingly everything that could be desired in temper and disposition; and he laid strong siege to the heart of the lovely Englishwoman. So successful was he in his wooing, that the beautiful widow declared she was "now in love for the first time in her life," and they were married in 1799. But in the very first week of the honeymoon, "the dove assumed the fierceness of the hawk:" her husband treated her unmercifully, and if she dared to complain, "plates, dishes, and any other moveables were thrown at her." Raised from a state of poverty to one of comparative affluence, the ungrateful Felican now bedecked himself in an elegant French uniform, and ordered his wife to tell everybody that she had bought him a commission; but for thus assuming a character to which he was not entitled, and for other *fourberies* he had committed, of which his cruel usage of his bride was not the least, he was PUBLICLY FLOGGED, by order of General Serrurier,—a punishment which, while it cut his wife to the soul, and humbled her to the dust, had not the slightest effect on his hardened nature.

The next year Braham, who had come to Italy

chiefly for study, was singing during the Carnival at the Scala, and was announced to appear with Mrs. Billington in an opera by Nasolini, *Il Trionfo di Claria.* The applause which he received at rehearsal enraged Felican, who intrigued till he persuaded the leader to omit the grand aria for the tenor voice, in which Braham's powers were advantageously displayed. This piece of spite and jealousy being noised about, the public openly testified their displeasure, and the next day it was announced by Gherardi, the manager, in the bills, that Braham's scena should be performed, and, on the second night of the opera, it was received with tumultuous applause. Braham, justly indignant, avenged himself in an ingenious manner; but his wrath descended on an innocent head. Mrs. Billington's embellishments were always elaborately studied, and when once fixed on, seldom changed; the angry tenor, knowing this, caught her roulades, and on the first opportunity, his air coming first, he coolly appropriated all her fioriture. Poor Mrs. Billington listened in dismay at the wings. She could not improvise ornaments and graces, and when she came on, the unusual meagreness of her style astonished the audience. She refused, in the next opera, to sing a duet with Braham; but, as she was good-natured, she forgave Braham, and they always remained excellent friends.

Notwithstanding Felican's abominable behaviour,

and the public disgrace he had undergone, the infatuated singer still loved her husband; and they went together to Treviso, in the Venetian States, where she had purchased a country-house. But no sooner were they settled in it than the ruffian resumed his infamous conduct: he insulted and beat her continually, and, worst of all, compelled her to wear the coarsest garments, and threatened to kill her if she did not surrender to him her jewels, which he thus wrenched from her. Driven to despair, she at last ran away, joined her faithful brother Charles at Venice, and set off with him, in 1801, for England.

On reaching London she was engaged at once: in fact, there was a pitched battle between Harris and Sheridan as to which should have her. She gave the preference to her old friend Harris, and signed a contract with him; the terms being 3,000 guineas to perform from October to April, three times a week, a free benefit being insured at 500*l.*, and 500*l.* insured to her brother for leading the band on the nights she sang. Sheridan, however, stoutly persisted that he had first offered those terms, and the dispute was ended by an arbitration, when it was decided that she should perform alternately at both houses.

Mrs. Billington appeared at Covent Garden the 3rd October, 1801, in the opera of *Artaxerxes*, so much admired at the period; in it Dr. Arne was said to have "consolidated the beautiful melody of Hasse, the

mellifluous richness of Pergolese, the easy flow of Piccini, and the finished cantabile of Sacchini, with his own pure and native simplicity." Thunders of applause greeted her entrance on the scene, and she responded "after the French manner," by curtseying respectfully to the three sides of the house. At the very commencement of her performance all the expectations of her audience were satisfied. In the duet of "Fair Aurora," which she sang with Incledon, she glided through the chromatic passage which closes the first and second strain, with a sweetness of effect which no one but herself could produce. In the air, "If o'er the cruel tyrant Love," she was exquisite, displaying in almost every bar an irreproachable taste. Her ornaments, though abundant, were chaste, and the additional notes, in which she soared with ease to D in alt., were as ingenious and tasteful as they were forcibly expressed. In short, nothing remained to crown the triumph of the evening but the execution of the familiar bravura which precedes the finale, "The soldier tir'd of war's alarms," in which she attained the acme of her art, and was vehemently encored. Incledon was an excellent Arbaces; and Mrs. Atkins, as far as her limited powers would allow, sang Semira's airs with sweetness and expression.

At the end of the first act, as the bills of the day announced, a bravura song, "Lost in anxious doubts," composed by Bianchi, was sung by Mrs. Billington,

with an obbligato accompaniment by Mr. Weichsel. This piece displayed the wonderful extent of her vocal powers, and the facility with which she executed it enraptured and astonished the audience.

She had much improved, every one remarked, since she was last in England: she was less redundant in ornament, and had acquired a more distinct articulation. Lord Mount Edgecumbe says she resembled Mara so much that the same observations would apply to both equally well. "Both were excellent musicians, thoroughly skilled in their profession; both had voices of uncommon sweetness and agility, particularly suited to the bravura style, and executed to perfection and with good taste everything they sang. But neither were Italian, and consequently both were deficient in recitative; neither had much feeling, both were deficient in theatrical talents, and they were absolutely null as actresses, therefore they were more calculated to give pleasure in the concert-room than on the stage." It was noticed that her pronunciation of the English language was not quite free from impurities, arising principally from the introduction of vowels before consonants, a habit probably acquired from the Italian custom. "Her whole style of elocution," observes one writer, "may be described as sweet and persuasive, rather than powerful and commanding. It naturally assumed the character of her mind and voice." She was considered the

most accomplished singer that had ever been born in England.

On Friday, November 13, she made her appearance in another part—that of Clara, in Sheridan's popular opera, *The Duenna*. In this character she was amiable and captivating, and her dress was exquisitely tasteful. Incledon was the Carlos; and nothing could be more excellent than Munden's Don Jerome.

She played Mandane for many nights at both theatres. One night she came to Drury Lane so hoarse as to render it a question whether she could possibly appear. As she was going off to dress in great perplexity, her maid came to tell her that the key of her jewel-box was missing, inquiring if she had it with her. "What can I have done with it?" exclaimed the vexed vocalist; "I suppose I must have swallowed it without knowing." "And a lucky thing too," said Wewitzer, always watching for an opportunity of launching a joke, "it may serve to open your chest."

On Thursday, October 15, as she was acting Mandane at Covent Garden, she suddenly fainted on the stage at the end of the second act, and a succession of the most alarming fits rendered it impossible for her to go on again. The cause of this distressing accident was singular. The day before she had sent for Mr. Heaviside, the surgeon, to look at her arm, which was much inflamed, and gave her acute pain; and a few

days afterwards he extracted an entire needle from below the right shoulder. The arm had assumed a black appearance, and the friendly surgeon strongly dissuaded her from performing; but she could not bear to disappoint the public. Happily, no evil results followed the accident, and in a fortnight she was well. She took a short holiday to recruit her strength and her nerves, and on the 4th November sang in the *Duenna* at both houses. Till then, that opera had never been acted at Sheridan's own theatre. In the part of Clara, it might have been supposed that "Adieu, thou dreary pile," was difficult enough for the most exigent admirers of florid singing, but Mrs. Billington introduced a piece by Nasolini, "which rendered her hearers breathless with astonishment." Quick, the original Mendoza, appeared with her.

By December the public had grown rather tired of Mandane, and the house was not well attended. Mrs. Billington therefore appeared, January 5, 1802, in a third character—that of Rosetta, a part which afforded her talents a greater scope than either Mandane or Clara. She was delightful; acted with a charming ease and comic humour, and sang the airs with spirit and perfect skill. Incledon played Young Meadows.

The crowds, which had diminished, now returned. On the first night the house had never been so crammed; the stage being so covered with ladies and gentlemen

that the performers had scarcely room to move. Among the notabilities who crowded the house one night when she was playing, was Jekyl, the witty barrister, accompanied by a friend from the country. When the curtain rose and "discovered" Rosetta and Lucinda in the garden, the ovation was so tumultuous that Mrs. Billington came forward to curtsey in acknowledgment. The country gentleman, fixing his eyes on the prima donna, who had prodigiously increased in bulk during her residence abroad, asked, "Is that Rosetta?" "No, sir," replied Jekyl, "it is not Rosetta, it is Grand Cairo!"

On the 30th April, a new comic entertainment called *Algonah*, the drama by Cobb, the music by Kelly, was produced at Drury Lane, for the benefit of Mrs. Billington; the chief parts being performed by Mrs. Billington, Mrs. Crouch, and Mrs. Caulfield. The performance was altogether very successful, and the heroine of the evening was surrounded by flatterers offering their congratulations on her triumph.

On returning home, a painful surprise awaited her. Comfortably lolling on one of the sofas in her drawing-room she found—her husband! Desperately enamoured of her English guineas, he vowed he could no longer bear to be separated from his "beloved Bettina." Overcome with terror, the only course that remained to the triumphant Queen of Song, the idol of the public, was to bribe her legal lord and master to

depart. "I never saw any woman so much in awe of man, as poor Mrs. Billington was of him whom she had married for love," said Kelly, who hated him cordially, and refused to know him.' The scoundrel Felican accepted the bribe, and left his wife in peace for a time.

Mrs. Billington appeared with Madame Mara on the 3rd June, 1802, the farewell night of that most distinguished singer. They sang a duet together, composed to display their mutual accomplishments; the contest excited both to the utmost pitch of their skill, and every one who heard them was astonished.

Having concluded her splendid career at the English theatre, Mrs. Billington entered into an engagement with the proprietors of the Italian Opera. Her brother was also engaged, as leader, to the exclusion of Salomon. She appeared on the 4th December, in Nasolini's serious opera *Merope*.

She was now wonderfully popular. Engagements multiplied; for no fashionable concert or musical entertainment was complete without her. Her income averaged fourteen thousand pounds a year; for she made large acquisitions in the shape of presents, allowances, benefits, &c.: at one period her property did not fall far short of sixty-five thousand pounds. Of her earnings she was not at all miserly. She took care to place her old father in comfortable circumstances (her mother had died young); and being child-

less—though she had had one child by Billington, which had died in infancy,—she adopted two little girls. The eldest of these children, a girl of nine years old, was sent to Brussels, to be educated at a convent there; the other, the daughter of a friend named Madocks, was brought to her when only seven days old, and reared with great care at a respectable boarding-school. She maintained a free hospitality at her charming villa at Hammersmith; her establishment was conducted on a scale of princely taste and magnificence, and she received royal, noble, and gentle visitors: ladies of title and high connections being pleased to attend her concerts and accept invitations to her splendid entertainments. Her early poverty, however, had impressed on her mind the necessity of economy; and she contrived to live rather under than above her income. Her hospitality and the habit of accommodating herself to her guests once led her into an awkward embarrassment. She had frequently received at her table a barrister of eminence, with whom she had several times talked on legal subjects, asking his opinion, from mere curiosity, on various points of law; and he, finding his affairs much deranged, had the impudence to send in a bill of costs to her, amounting to three hundred pounds, for consultations! This she showed to her solicitor, who informed her that though the barrister could not legally enforce the claim, yet he would advise

her, the man being in great distress, to compromise the matter by making him a present of a hundred pounds.

As a hostess, Mrs. Billington was irresistibly charming; but at this period, although her manners were bewitching, she was beginning to become somewhat coarse and masculine; the outlines of her once sylph-like figure being lost in her embonpoint. The pencil of Sir Joshua has depicted her as St. Cecilia, by way of companion to his portrait of Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse; and of this picture (which drew forth Haydn's famous compliment), Ward, the engraver, executed a very faithful and spirited reproduction.

In public she was always good-humoured and obliging, and would often put aside difficulties or annoyances with easy good-nature. Once she had to sing at a concert with a Miss Parke, when this young lady, jealous of the supremacy of the great cantatrice, threatened to fling up her engagement if her name were printed in smaller type than that of Mrs. Billington. The conductor nervously informed his prima donna of this threat, and asked her what he should do. Mrs. Billington laughed, and said: "Print my name in the smallest letters employed in the bill." Which was done; "and much Miss Parke gained by her corpulent type," says the narrator of the circumstance.

A splendid combination of talent was offered to the

frequenters of the Opera House in 1804, when Mrs. Billington and Madame Grassini, who had just appeared, performed together in *Il Ratto di Proserpina*, composed expressly by Winter for these two beautiful women and exquisite vocalists. The charming duet, sung by them, "Vaghe colli," was always enthusiastically encored; a beautiful trio, also, sung by them, accompanied by Viganoni,—the cavatina, "Che farò senza la madre?" was rapturously applauded. The entire opera was admired, indeed, and considered Winter's chef-d'œuvre, although he had written it in three weeks.

In January, 1805, Winter produced a new serious opera, entitled *L'Amore Fraterno*, the music of which was very beautiful. Mrs. Billington was the heroine, and sang as only she could sing, ably supported by the two tenor singers, Viganoni and Braham. She also appeared in Nasolini's opera of *Ferdinand in Mexico;* and in May, Winter composed for her the opera of *Calypso*, the music of which she sang to perfection, and "looked the character divinely." Lord Mount Edgecumbe gave it as his opinion that the operas in which Mrs. Billington excelled were *La Clemenza di Scipione*, composed by John Christian Bach, and revived for her; Paisiello's *Elfrida; Armida, Castore e Polluce*, and others by Winter; and Mozart's *Clemenza di Tito*.

She was still admired, and overflowing houses testified to her popularity; but finding her health begin-

ning to fail, Mrs. Billington wisely resolved to quit the stage. For her benefit, which took place March 30th, 1806, she selected Mozart's *Clemenza di Tito*, which had never been heard in this country; thus being the first to introduce the immortal composer's music into England. There was only one manuscript score of *Clemenza di Tito* in the kingdom; this copy was in the possession of the Prince of Wales, who kindly sent it to the Opera House for the use of Mrs. Billington. The band, the singers, and chorus, being very anxious to hear the contents of so precious a novelty as a manuscript opera by Mozart, Mrs. Billington, with her customary good-nature, sat down to the pianoforte, and played the accompaniments from the score, singing the principal part—that of Vitellia. In this way she went through the entire work, from beginning to end, giving Mozart's expression and character so admirably, at sight, that the impromptu audience were enraptured not only with the beauty of the music, but the wonderful power and musical skill of the singer.

The performance on her benefit night was highly successful, and proved that it was not from any lack of applause that she retired from the stage. "She sang with uncommon effect, and seemed anxious to repay with every exertion the approbation and attention of so splendid and numerous an audience." At the close of the season she retired. Almost her last

appearance was on a performance for the benefit of a charity at Whitehall Chapel, at which the Queen, Prince Regent, and most of the Royal family were present.

After Mrs. Billington had relinquished public singing, she was asked by J. B. Cramer to appear for his benefit. She replied, "I cannot sing for you, but I will play for you, if you like." Latterly she had accompanied herself, in her bravura songs on the Opera stage, in a style which was equal to her vocal performance. In 1809 she retired. No entreaties were spared by the noble directors of the Ancient Concerts, and the managers of every theatre or concert at which she had assisted, to induce her to sing; but her resolution was finally taken. The only time she ever appeared after this was on the 3rd May, 1811, at the concert-room of the King's Theatre, for the benefit of her brother. She sang a fine composition of Cimarosa's, and the "Soldier tir'd," in which she seemed determined to leave a lasting impression of her extraordinary powers on her hearers.

After a separation of fifteen years, Mrs. Billington actually invited her husband to England in 1817; and then proceeded with him to Italy, accompanied by one of the girls whom she had adopted—Miss Madocks, to whom she meant to bequeath her large fortune. Her plate and valuable ornaments were transmitted by sea, while the two old, but newly-united, lovers crossed

at Calais, *en route* for the shores of the Adriatic. After re-visiting their mansion at St. Artien, near Venice, it was their intention to go to Rome and Naples. The ill-fated wife had not been long reunited to her brutal husband, however, before he renewed his brutality, and at length gave her a blow that laid her on a bed of sickness, from which she never rose again. She was taken ill August 18th, 1818, and died on the 25th of the same month.

On the death of his wife, Felican, possessed with the idea that Miss Madocks was the daughter of a Royal duke and of Mrs. Billington, and that by marrying her he would obtain a handsome fortune, laid a plan for entrapping her into accepting his hand. Fortunately his vile scheme was detected by some individual in England, who, through the agency of the physician, Aglietti, obtained the poor girl's release from the convent in which she had been placed by Mrs. Billington's caution, and caused her to be brought over to this country.

Mrs. Billington had, at different epochs, amassed three different fortunes. One was spent with her friends, another was seized by enemies, and the third was left partly in possession of, and the remainder claimed by, her husband, to the amount of twenty thousand pounds.

Napoleon the First once asked whether the English were not proud of Mrs. Billington.

CHAPTER XIV.

GIUSEPPA GRASSINI.

ONE of the most charming and popular singers at La Scala, in the Carnival of 1794, was Giuseppa Grassini. She was born in 1775, at Varese, in Lombardy, where her father, a farmer, resided. The rare beauty of her voice and appearance induced General Belgioso to offer to defray the expenses of her musical education. He gave her the best masters to be found in Milan, who neglected nothing that could develop the natural abilities of their pupil; but Giuseppina was a wayward, indolent little beauty, who disliked any kind of study, and seemed resolved to leave it entirely to chance whether she should become a great vocalist or not. Nevertheless her progress in the good and "large" manner of the old school was rapid; for she could sing to perfection, but could not give the slightest reason for anything she did.

She appeared for the first time at La Scala, during the Carnival of 1794, singing with Marchesi and Lazzarini in the *Artaserse* of Zingarelli, and in the

Demofoonte of Portogallo. The advantages she derived from making her début with the first artistes of her time—Marchesi and Crescentini—were the means of perfecting her talent. Never was début more brilliant; and soon the principal theatres of Italy offered her engagements. In the Carnival season of 1796 she appeared at La Scala in *Apelle e Campaspe*, by Traetta, and Zingarelli's *Giulietta e Romeo*, with Crescentini and the tenor Adamo Bianchi.

Girolamo Crescentini was the last of the fine Italian school which produced Senesino, Farinelli, and others. He was endowed with one of the most beautiful voices imaginable. "Nothing could be compared to the suavity of his accents," says Fétis, "to the force of his expression, to the perfect taste of his fioriture, to the breadth of his phrasing, or to that cluster of splendid qualities, any one of which, cultivated to the same degree of superiority, would have sufficed to assure to the possessor the first rank among the singers of the day." He had, however, the most inflated idea of his own consequence; and his vanity and impertinence, of which many amusing stories are related, were utterly ridiculous.

In 1797, Giuseppina was the reigning prima donna at La Fenice, where she took the part of Orazia in the new opera by Cimarosa, in which she created an extraordinary sensation. The same season she was engaged at Naples to sing at the San Carlo during the fêtes in

honour of the marriage of the hereditary Prince. Surrounded by homage and flattery she was now the acknowledged Queen of Song.

Grassini was an exquisite vocalist, in spite of her ignorance; and, albeit fickle and capricious, a most beautiful and fascinating woman—luxurious, prodigal, and generous, though heavy and dull in conversation. Her voice was originally a soprano, but changed to a deep contralto; it was rich, round, and full, though of limited extent, being within its proper compass of about one octave of good natural notes. Though not unfrequently a little husky and guttural, it was of delicious quality, and of great volume and power; but if she attempted to go higher than its small range of notes she produced only a shriek, "quite unnatural, and almost painful to the ear." Her style (exclusively the cantabile) was rich and finished; and though she had not much execution, what she did was elegant and perfect; she never attempted what was beyond her powers. Her dramatic instincts were always true, and in the expression of the subdued and softer passions she has never been excelled. As an actress she had many advantages. Her figure was tall and commanding, and her carriage and attitudes had a classic beauty combined with a grace peculiarly her own. Her head was noble, her features were symmetrical, her hair and eyes of the deepest black, and her entire appearance had an air of singular majesty.

From Naples she returned (in 1800) to Milan. After the battle of Marengo she sang in a concert before the great Napoleon, who was so fascinated by her many and irresistible attractions that he desired to be introduced to her. Las Cases gives a sketch of this interview in many respects irreconcilable with the real circumstances of the life of Grassini. However, he says she reminded the mighty conqueror that she had "made her début precisely during the early achievements of the general of the army of Italy. 'I was then,' said she, 'in the full lustre of my beauty and my talent. My performance in the *Virgins of the Sun* was the topic of universal conversation. I fascinated every eye, and inflamed every heart. The young general alone was insensible to my charms; and yet he was the only object of my wishes. What caprice—what singularity! When I possessed some value, when all Italy was at my feet, and I heroically disdained its admiration for a single glance from you, I was unable to obtain it; and now how strange an alteration. You condescend to notice me now, when I am not worth the trouble, and am no longer worthy of you.'" An extraordinary speech for a very lovely and very vain woman of twenty-five, almost at the outset of her career. Be that as it may, Napoleon invited the young singer to Paris. Grassini's beauty was, in one sense, a disadvantage to her in accepting this invitation, for Josephine was

so jealous that, as was well known at the time, many ladies had been banished from Paris on mere suspicion. She took an inveterate dislike to Grassini, and violently hated her.

Grassini sang on the 22nd July at the grand fête given in honour of Marengo, in the Church of the Invalides, where there were assembled eight hundred musicians. This magnificent solemnity created an extraordinary excitement. The bronzed warriors of Marengo were there, their helmets flashing in the summer sunlight, and two regiments of grenadiers of the Guard arrived at the moment the concert commenced. The military airs which Gossec had composed for the occasion were executed with marvellous precision by the immense orchestra. Lays surpassed himself; and Madame Grassini, who had made a profound sensation in Paris, seemed inspired. The Opera corps gave the chorus from *La Caravane*, "La victoire est à nous," with a grand trumpet accompaniment, which was almost drowned in the explosion of public joy and delight.

In two concerts which Madame Grassini gave soon after at the Académie she achieved a splendid triumph. At the first the most exclusive members of the Parisian monde and the most distinguished strangers crowded the theatre; on the second occasion, despite the tropical heat, the house was completely invaded long before the hour for commencing. The Opera did not

perform works of a character suited to her style; she knew but little French, and her pronunciation was very defective, so that she could not appear at the Opera Français, and was, therefore, obliged to restrict her performances to concerts and private soirées. Being debarred from performing at the Opera, Madame Grassini quitted France almost immediately, receiving before her departure a magnificent present from Napoleon.

In November, 1801, the Italian prima donna was in Berlin, where she announced concerts which seem never to have taken place. In 1802 she returned to France, and Napoleon made her directress of the Opera in 1804. At first Josephine had permitted her to appear at her private concerts at the Tuileries, but she did not detest the beautiful singer less cordially than heretofore. It was whispered that the cantatrice did in reality seek to attract the attention of Napoleon, and that she turned her eyes fixedly towards the throne of the Dictator—another Cleopatra endeavouring to captivate Cæsar.

"I hear, Madame, that our Grassini is a favourite with the great Napoleon," said Count Sommaglia to Josephine one morning. "Yes," answered the irate wife of the First Consul, hardly able to disguise her spite, "the ridiculous vanity of the creature amuses us amazingly. Since she has been made directress of the Italian Opera, there is more intriguing going

on among these gentry than there is with the diplomats: in the midst of a serious conversation, she will break out into a horselaugh, throw herself on a sofa, and fancying herself Semiramis on the throne of Nineveh, burst forth in a great style with 'Son Regina, e son amata!'" ("I am a Queen, and I am beloved!") "One day," says Fouché, "Bonaparte observed that, considering my acknowledged ability, he was astonished I did not perform my functions better—that there were several things of which I was ignorant. 'Yes,' replied I, 'there certainly are things of which I was ignorant, but which I now know well enough. For instance, a little man, muffled in a grey cloak, and accompanied by a single servant, often steals out on a dark evening from a secret door of the Tuileries, enters a closed carriage, and drives off to Signora G——. This little man is yourself, and yet this fanciful songstress jilts you continually for Rode the fiddler.' The Consul answered not a word; he turned his back, rang, and immediately withdrew."

The Italian Opera of London was, in 1804, opened under the direction of Mr. Francis Goold; who engaged Madame Grassini for the season, to perform alternately with Mrs. Billington, giving her a salary of 3,000*l.* for the months of March to July. Grassini made her first appearance in the serious opera of *La Vergine del Sole*, by Meyer, and her fine voice was heard to peculiar advantage in the duet of "Parto,

ti lascio," with Viganoni. The melody of the effective grand chorus, "Qual error," in this opera, was much admired for its unusual beauty and originality. The origin of this chorus, as told by Madame Grassini, was curious. Meyer, the composer, was at a supper-party at Venice, when a young Englishman being asked to give a song, sang the ballad "Pretty Maud, pretty Maud." Meyer, delighted with the melody, asked for pen and ink, and having requested the young man to repeat it, set it down, and transformed the simple ballad into a grand chorus.

Madame Grassini, although she had so fine a voice, was extremely beautiful, and an excellent actress, yet did not make much impression at first; and this want of appreciation on the part of the public alarmed the Italian donna so much that when her benefit was about to take place, she feared to venture on singing alone, and begged of the good-natured Mrs. Billington to assist her. *Il Ratto di Proserpina* was composed by Winter for the occasion, Ceres being personated by Billington, and Proserpina by Grassini. The music of each part was admirably adapted to display the respective powers of the two performers, so different, yet each so exquisite. The plaintive accents of Grassini in the little simple air, "Paga fui," in which she laments the happy days of her childhood, subdued and melted every heart, and brought tears to many eyes. The tide of popularity

suddenly set in for Grassini. She carried off all the applause: her beauty, her command of expression, her grace, were universally admitted, and she became at once a reigning Queen of Song. Her deep tones, harmonizing with the clear bird-like notes of Mrs. Billington, produced a thrilling effect. "Not only was she rapturously applauded in public," says Lord Mount Edgecumbe, "but she was taken up by the first society, fêtée, caressed, and introduced as a regular guest in most of the fashionable assemblies." Of the claims to admiration of the two singers he says, somewhat maliciously, "No doubt the deaf would have been charmed with Grassini, and the blind must have been delighted with Mrs. Billington." The airs sung by the two prima donnas were to be found on the pianoforte of every lady who affected to sing Italian music.

Il Ratto di Proserpina was the only opera in which they appeared together, for Goold, contrary to all advice, engaged them on condition that, with the exception of the one opera, they should appear singly on alternate Tuesdays and Saturdays. It was understood that the Saturdays were to be strictly kept, for the difference between the days was most extraordinary, five hundred pounds being sometimes taken on Saturday, and often only sixty pounds on Tuesday. This arrangement had nearly caused the theatre to be shut one Tuesday night. It was Mrs. Billington's turn to perform, but she was so hoarse from a cold

that she could not sing a note. Goold implored Grassini to sing, but she declared that no inducement should prevail with her to exchange her Saturday for a Tuesday. Kelly, as stage manager, did all in his power to persuade her to relent, but she was deaf to all entreaties. At last he resorted to a somewhat reprehensible method of inducing her to agree. He called on her in the morning, and began talking carelessly on the subject. "My dear Grassini," said he, in an off-hand way, "as manager I ought to prevail upon you to perform, but as a performer myself, I enter entirely into your feelings, and think you perfectly right not to sing out of your turn: the Saturday is yours; but what I say to you I trust you will not repeat to Mr. Goold, as it might be of serious injury to me." "Depend upon it, my dear Kelly," answered Grassini, "I will not; I look upon you, by what you have just said, to be my sincere friend." As he was leaving the room, he turned, as with a sudden thought. "To be sure, it is rather unlucky you do not sing to-night, for this morning a message came from the Lord Chamberlain's office to announce the Queen's intention to come incognita, accompanied by the Princesses, purposely to see you perform; and a large grillée is actually ordered to be prepared for them, where they can perfectly see and hear without being seen by the audience; but I'll step myself to the Lord Chamberlain's office, and state that you are confined

to your bed, and express your mortification at disappointing the Royal party." "Stop, Kelly," cried the cantatrice, all in a flutter; "what you now say alters the case. If her Majesty Queen Charlotte wishes to see *La Vergine del Sole*, and to hear me, I am bound to obey her Majesty's commands. Go to Goold, and tell him I *will* sing." Accordingly she did perform in the evening. "When I went into her dressing-room, after the first act," says Kelly, "her Majesty not having arrived, Grassini, suspicious that I had made up a story to cajole her, taxed me with the trick; and when I confessed it, she took it very good-naturedly, and joined in the laugh at her own credulity."

Early in 1805, Madame Grassini appeared in Cimarosa's chef-d'œuvre, *Gli Orazi ed i Curiazi*, which was got up with great care. Her acting in this piece was pronounced to be almost equal to that of Mrs. Siddons; in the last scene particularly, where she exclaimed, "O Orazio, mio bene," leaning over her dead husband, she was "positively heartrending." The opera drew crowded houses to the King's Theatre, as it had done at Venice, where it had been originally produced. Grassini appeared at Braham's benefit, June 13. She performed between the acts in a scene representing Andromache mourning over the tomb of Hector, in which the graces of her action, and the pathetic tones of her voice, vanquished criticism itself.

After several brilliant seasons, Madame Grassini left England, and returned to the Continent in 1808. She was immediately engaged at the Parisian Opera, and at the concerts of the Court, where she sang with Crescentini, Brizzi, Crivelli, Tacchinardi, and Madame Paer. Her salary was 36,000 francs, exclusive of about 15,000 francs' worth of presents, while her *pension* was 15,000 francs. Among the operas which she sang at the theatres of the Tuileries and of St. Cloud was *Didone*, which Paer composed expressly for her, and in which she performed with rare talent and dramatic expression. She was also admirable in the works of the ancient repertoire; especially in the *Œdipe* of Sacchini.

Talma used to say of Grassini that he had never seen any other actress—not even Mars, Dorval, or Duchesnois—endowed with a physiognomy so expressive or so mutable. The Grecian outline of her profile, her beautiful forehead, rich black hair and eyebrows, her superb dark eyes, "now flashing with tragedy's fiery passions, then softly languishing with love;" finally, "that astonishing ensemble of perfections which nature had collected in her, as if to review all her gifts in one woman; all these qualities together exercised on the spectator such a charm as none could resist. Pasta herself might have looked on and learned, when Grassini had to portray either indignation, grief, anger, or despair."

One night, in 1808, she sang with Crescentini in *Romeo e Giulietta*, at the Tuileries. During the exquisite scene of the third act, the audience were bathed in tears. The Emperor, carried away, and forgetting the rules of etiquette, clapped his hands and "shouted like a school-boy," and Talma, seated on a bench near the orchestra, did not attempt to conceal his emotion: the great tragedian confessed that he had never been so deeply touched by anything in his life before.

When the performance was over, Napoleon sent to la Grassini a slip of paper, on which he had written:—"Bon pour vingt mille francs, NAPOLEON."

Crescentini glanced at the paper. "Twenty thousand francs!" cried he. "That is a round sum."

"It is the marriage portion of one of my nieces," replied Grassini, smiling.

To Crescentini, the Emperor sent the order of the Iron Crown.

One morning, at St. Helena, Napoleon was speaking of the tenacity with which the French clung to slight matters of decorum:—"In conformity with my system," observed he, "of amalgamating all kinds of merit, and of rendering one and the same reward universal, I had an idea of presenting the cross of the Legion of Honour to Talma; but I refrained from doing this, in consideration of our capricious manners and absurd prejudices. I wished to make a first ex-

periment in an affair that was out of date and unimportant, and I accordingly gave the iron crown to Crescentini. The decoration was foreign, and so was the individual on whom it was conferred. This circumstance was less likely to attract public notice or to render my conduct the subject of discussion; at worst, it could only give rise to a few malicious jokes. Such," continued the Emperor, "is the influence of public opinion. I distributed sceptres at will, and thousands readily bowed beneath their sway; and yet I could not give away a ribbon without the chance of incurring disapprobation; for I believe my experiment, with regard to Crescentini, proved unsuccessful." "It did, Sire," observed some one present. "The circumstance occasioned a great outcry in Paris; it drew forth a general anathema in all the drawing-rooms of the metropolis, and afforded ample scope for the expression of malignant feeling. However, at one of the evening parties of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, a *bon-mot* had the effect of completely stemming the torrent of indignation. A pompous orator was holding forth, in an eloquent strain, on the subject of the honour that had been conferred on Crescentini. He declared it to be a disgrace, a horror, a perfect profanation, and inquired what right Crescentini could have to such a distinction? On hearing this, the beautiful Madame Grassini, who was present, rose majestically from her chair, and, with a truly theatrical

tone and gesture, exclaimed, '*Et sa blessure, monsieur!* do you make no allowance for that?' This produced a general burst of laughter and applause, and poor Madame Grassini was very much embarrassed by her success."

"The Emperor, who now heard this anecdote for the first time," says Las Cases, "was highly amused by it. He often afterwards alluded to it, and occasionally related it himself."

In 1812, Madame Grassini reappeared in England, at the King's Theatre, and was at first rapturously received. But she was no longer what she had been. Her beauty was undiminished, but her acting was now languid and ineffective; at least, it appeared so, contrasted by the energetic and animated manner of her successor, Catalani. Her voice, too, was changed: she had endeavoured to regain its upper register, and instead of a mellow contralto, it had become a hoarse soprano. Still, however, she displayed much of her former grace and style, especially in her favourite part of Orazia, and in Paer's opera, *Didone*. But the public found that she was no longer the Grassini of four years back; and after one season she departed, unregretted.

She went to Milan in 1816, where she sang with Trammezzani; and appeared there also in 1817, in *Gli Orazi*, etc., with her sister Rosa and the tenor Banderoli. She went next to Amsterdam; and in

1818, she sang in concerts at the San Benedetto, Venice. In 1820 she was singing at Brescia, in Nasolini's *Semiramide*, and Rossini's *Eduardo e Cristina*; in 1822, she was at Munich, and then at Vienna, where she sang in Cimarosa's *Gli Orazi ed i Curiazi*, and in a new opera by Pixis. In the spring of 1823, she was at Florence, with Rosa Morandi and Eliodoro Bianchi.

Madame Grassini married Colonel Ragani, afterwards director of the Opera in Paris; and that city, where she had passed the happiest years of her life, was chosen by her for her retirement.

In private life Madame Grassini was exceedingly agreeable, though she had no pretensions to brilliant conversational powers. She was gay and good-humoured, and very unaffected. Exempt from all feelings of envy or jealousy, she was always ready to oblige other artistes, and to bring forward young aspirants to fame.

M. Scudo, in his *Musique Ancienne et Moderne*, tells an amusing anecdote of the famous cantatrice. At a party, given in Paris some time about 1838, at which Madame Grassini was present, the conversation turned on Napoleon and Louis XVIII. Some one imagined the two meeting in the Elysian Fields, and discussing the great events which had taken place in their time, and every one present contributed an idea to this improvised dialogue of the dead. Madame

Grassini archly said: "I am sure that the first question which the great Napoleon would put to King Louis would be this: 'Why did you not continue the pension which I had given to my dear Grassini?'"

Madame Grassini died, January, 1850, at Milan, in her eighty-fifth year. So well had she preserved her looks, that she did not appear to be more than fifty. Her portrait, by Madame Lebrun, is at Avignon, in the museum of that city.

CHAPTER XV.

ANGELICA CATALANI.

In a fertile valley near Sinigaglia, a small obscure town about forty miles from Rome, there dwelt towards the latter end of the last century a humble family, consisting of father and mother, four girls, and two boys. "Contented wi' little," because they never dreamed of having more, the family was just sufficiently raised above the villagers to secure respect without exciting envy. Signor Augustus Catalani was a local magistrate, a sort of justice of the peace; and in order to increase his income—rather straitened by the necessities of six children—he dealt in diamonds, making his most profitable sales at the great annual fair held in the vicinity.

Angelica, one of the girls, born in October, 1779, was selected as the one who should be provided for by being placed in a convent. The child, ardent, susceptible, and gay, did not make any objection to change her monotonous home life for the society at the convent; on the contrary, she skipped about in

childish glee, full of pleasant anticipations. She was twelve years old when her father took her one morning to the convent of Sta. Lucia di Gubbio, which was twenty leagues from Sinigaglia, in the duchy of Urbino. The establishment being exclusively devoted to the education of noble young ladies of the province, Signor Catalani secured the admission of his daughter by proving his relationship with the house of Mastai, the family to which Pope Pius IX. belongs. Angelica's mother was very averse to dooming the lively child to a life so freezing, so heart-wearing, so antagonistic to all her instincts as that of a nunnery; but the signor would listen to no remonstrance, and Angelica clapped her hands and danced for joy at the prospect of joining so select a throng of young damsels and veiled sisters. So with tearful eyes the mother went, with her husband and child, to present Angelica to the lady superior. The abbess was a woman of refined mind, entirely free from bigotry, and won the hearts of her children by her kindness and amiability.

Music being an essential part of the services of the convent, on Sundays, and high festivals especially, the nuns and novices sang hymns and sacred pieces, which drew crowds to the chapel. It was soon discovered that the Signorina Catalani had a lovely voice; and the lady abbess determined on giving her every opportunity of cultivating the gift. Ere long the flexibility, compass, and brilliancy of her tones excited

such wonder among the nuns that it was debated whether it would not be justifiable to use so rare an endowment as a means of attracting a greater concourse of worshippers to the shrine of their patroness, Santa Lucia. They commenced by giving Angelica short solos to sing, which became noticed immediately, and on fête days the doors of the chapel were so thronged that numbers were obliged to go away, despairing of a chance to hear *la maravigliosa Angelica*. Scandalized by the chapel being transformed into a kind of concert-room or theatre, some scrupulous devotee complained to the bishop, and in consequence the lady abbess received a summary injunction to discontinue so objectionable a practice. This was very hard, when it proved a source of such emolument to the establishment; so the abbess quietly placed her young friend behind a group of novices, who concealed her and tempered the brilliancy of her voice, while the congregation knew very well that their favourite still sang. On one occasion Angelica sang "Ave Maria Stella" so touchingly, that, melted into tears, the crowd pressed towards the place where she stood, anxious to obtain a glimpse of the fair Angelica.

Eager for study, the little girl at last brought on herself a serious illness, by striving to outstrip her companions; and the venerable abbess, alarmed by her loss of bloom and her wearied looks, sent in haste for her parents. She was now fourteen, and had

profited more by her musical studies in two years' sojourn than many another had done in twice that time; but of course her education was still wofully deficient in other respects, and this she never repaired. On her return home, the neighbours, learning the opinion of the abbess that the voice of Angelica was perfect, flocked to Signor Catalani's house, with the hope of hearing the new prodigy; and with girlish vanity she would often show them that they did not require to enter the house to hear her magic strains, by singing with a power so tremendous that she could be heard at a long distance.

It was represented to her father that a gift so rare ought not to be thrown away, and that he ought to take some steps towards training Angelica to the duties of a professional life; but for some time he was unable to decide on allowing his daughter to be devoted to the profanity of the theatre: a rigid Roman Catholic, viewing, too, with pardonable complacency, his dignity as a magistrate, he was loth that a child of his should be a vocalist by profession. At length, however, he was forced by circumstances to yield to the urgent entreaties of those about him, for he was reduced to poverty by the Italian wars, and he made arrangements for taking Angelica to Rome, when his intentions were forestalled by the accidental visit to their quiet valley of an eminent musical composer, who became her instructor.

From the hands of this master, Angelica was taken by her father to Florence, to receive finishing lessons from Marchesi. That virtuoso taught her partly to control the profuse luxuriancy of her voice, but at the same time he unfortunately encouraged her fondness for the "pomps and tinsel" of vocalization. While studying, she went to hear a great singer at the theatre of Florence, and, while listening to the ravishing strains, the tears began to steal down her cheeks. "Alas!" she cried, with a naïveté which was almost touching, "I shall never attain perfection like this!" The cantatrice desired to see the young girl who felt her power so deeply, and, having asked her to sing, embraced her with tenderness, saying, "Be re-assured, my child: in a few years you will surpass me, and it will be I who shall weep at your success."

At the age of sixteen Angelica met with her first engagement. Just at this time—1795—Caros, the director of La Fenice, was in despair. He had prepared a new opera for the Carnival with the utmost care and splendour, when his prima donna suddenly died; and, knowing not where to seek a substitute, he was contemplating the very unpleasant alternative of closing his theatre. Zamboni, the prompter, mentioned that he was acquainted with a young girl who seemed to promise well; and introduced Angelica. Caros at once accepted her offer of singing for him, and she made her début in the part of Lodoiska, in

the opera of that name by Mayer. She was the loveliest débutante that had come forward for years, and such a voice had never been heard before. Tall, and of fine proportion, dazzlingly fair, with beautiful blue eyes, and lovely yet noble-looking features, she was like a painter's ideal. Her physiognomy was capable of every shade of expression, both playful and forcible; for though almost severely grand in outline, her features could assume the character "not merely of gaiety, but even of arch simplicity, and her smile was charming." Her voice was a soprano of the purest quality, embracing a compass of nearly three octaves, from G to F, and so powerful that no band could overwhelm its tones, which thrilled through every fibre of the hearer. Full, rich, and magnificent beyond any other voice ever heard, "it bore no resemblance," said one writer, "to any instrument, except we could imagine the tone of musical glasses to be magnified in volume to the same gradation of power." She could ascend at will—though she was ignorant of the rules of art—from the smallest perceptible sound to the loudest and most magnificent crescendo, exactly as she pleased. One of her favourite caprices of ornament was to imitate the swell and fall of a bell, making her tones sweep through the air with the most delicious undulation, and, using her voice at pleasure, she would shower her graces in an absolutely wasteful profusion. Her greatest defect was that, while the ear

was bewildered with the beauty and tremendous power of her voice, the feelings were untouched: she never touched the heart. She could not, like Mara, thrill, nor, like Billington, captivate, her hearers by a bird-like softness and brilliancy; she simply astonished. "She was a florid singer, and nothing but a florid singer, whether grave or airy, in the church, orchestra, or upon the stage." With a prodigious volume and richness of tone, and a marvellous rapidity of vocalization, she could execute brilliantly the most florid notation, leaving her audience in breathless amazement; but her intonation was very uncertain. However, this did not trouble her much.

In the season of 1798—three years after her début—she sang at Leghorn, with Crivelli, Marchesi, and Mrs. Billington. In 1799 the Prince Regent of Portugal, a great musical amateur, invited the lovely Angelica to Lisbon, desiring to secure her services as first singer in his Chapel Royal. On her arrival there, she received an offer from the director of the Opera, at a salary of 24,000 cruzados (three thousand pounds), which the Prince permitted her to accept. Crescentini took a kindly interest in his young countrywoman, and gave her much useful advice; and as he was a master of a far more severe school than Marchesi, she profited by his instructions. During several seasons she was the idol of the city as well as of the Court of Lisbon. The reserve of her manners, her known piety,

and the goodness of her heart won all alike. As for the Regent, he treated her as one of his own children.

It happened that there was, in the suite of General Lannes, French Ambassador at Lisbon, a young officer of noble family, M. de Vallebreque, captain of Hussars; a handsome man, of distinguished appearance and fine manners, if not particularly remarkable for talent. He had been compelled to fly his native country, though for reasons by no means discreditable. Being quartered in a German town with some brother officers, he had received a gross insult from a young count, his superior officer, whom he challenged; the count was wounded, to death as it seemed, and Vallebreque sought refuge in an obscure part of Vienna. While he lay in concealment, the count recovered, and being a good-natured young man, would have gladly become reconciled to his gallant subaltern; but his family vindictively determined to bring the matter to a court-martial, and as they were wealthy and powerful, the day went against poor De Vallebreque, who was condemned to perpetual banishment. As it was unsafe for him to remain in the Austrian territory, he quitted it for ever, and joined the suite of General Lannes.

One night, as Angelica was singing in the theatre, her eyes alighted on this handsome young man, who was sitting in one of the boxes, elaborately dressed, and distinguished especially by a diamond aigrette in front of his military cap. Now Angelica was not above

the little weaknesses of her sex: she liked diamonds, and did not object to being admired; and she could not avoid remarking the ardent though respectful glances directed towards her by the owner of the brilliant aigrette. It was with a coquettish pleasure, therefore, that she observed the distinguished-looking young officer in the green-room when she came off the stage; nor did she assume her most forbidding frown when he was introduced to her as "M. de Vallebreque," captain in the 8th Hussars. After this, she had frequent opportunities of meeting the young officer in the circle of the French Ambassador. His manners were lively and elegant, and he was of an ardent temperament. Angelica was charming in conversation, energetic and spirited, but possessed of great sensibility, sweetness of temper, and warmth of affection; and it was impossible to be in her society without being fascinated by her good-humour, vivacity, and simplicity of character. They were both in the first flush of youth and beauty, and they mutually fell passionately in love.

M. de Vallebreque went to Signor Catalani to ask his sanction to their union. But papa had other ideas with regard to his daughter. Already she was reaping a golden harvest by her talents, and he felt disinclined to relinquish such a source of wealth. He, therefore, coldly repressed the proposals of the lover, and though he could afford no sufficient reasons for discouraging

his suit, he yet gave him to understand that it was hopeless. Poor Angelica was miserable when she learned the cold reception her handsome young soldier had met with; and became so thoroughly wretched, that in a few days she could not sing; or would not sing: for she was hasty and passionate to a most extraordinary degree. Affairs were in this state, when one morning her father received an anonymous letter, stating that M. de Vallebreque was a banished and proscribed person. Glad of this reasonable excuse, the signor commanded that De Vallebreque should never enter the house until he had disproved the accusation. In vain the young officer demanded an interview, in order that he might rebut the charge; which he was conscious he could do to the satisfaction of even the most partial. The signor sent the same answer to every entreaty: when the charge was proved to be false, then—more might be said. Angelica wept, sighed, and, worst of all, was incapable of singing: the only sentence that could be extracted from her was a deeply mournful "Ma che bel uffiziale!"

At last, Signor Catalani, seeing it was useless to persist, agreed to read Vallebreque's written account of the origin of the transaction alluded to by the anonymous writer.

But he chose to be still dissatisfied; though he yielded so far to his daughter's passionate representations, that he wrote to Vienna, inquiring into the

circumstances. Whilst awaiting the reply, the agony of suspense which the young girl endured was almost beyond her strength: her father, irascible and impatient, was furious, and finally, unable to control her feelings before others, Angelica confined herself to her room until the answer came. It arrived at length; and fully exculpated De Vallebreque, whose praise was in the mouth of every one, as a spirited and noble young man. The count bore him no malice, and was known to speak warmly of his antagonist's high sense of honour.

But Signor Catalani still persisted that his family should never be disgraced by an alliance with a banished man. Angelica, justly indignant at his utter want of feeling, withdrew to her own room once more; and alternately choked with passion and melted to tears, she only thought of some means of escape. Looking from her window in the grey of the morning, her pale cheeks wet with tears, she perceived a figure standing in the shadow cast by the opposite house. It was her lover, who held up a billet towards her. She quickly formed a rope by tying handkerchiefs together, and drew the letter up; Vallebreque then hastily quitted the place. The billet told her, in passionate language, that no one had a right to separate them, as betrothed lovers; and urged her to recover her spirits, so as to be enabled to resume her professional duties; then, as she was a favourite at

Court, she might throw herself at the feet of the Prince and plead their cause, confident of success. Flushed with hope, Angelica astonished her family by suddenly declaring herself ready to resume her performances. But papa, astute and cautious, suspected that there was some plot, and resolved to redouble his vigilance.

With a firm step and joyful countenance, she reappeared on the stage, and was welcomed back with acclamations of delight. She surpassed herself; but, unluckily, the Prince did not appear. The reaction was terrible: she was utterly cast down; and her father, observing her joy and subsequent languor, flattered himself that he had cleverly prevented a meeting between the lovers. Angelica, on reaching her chamber, sat down to think, and soon made up her mind as to what she should do. At break of day she hurriedly stole down the back-stairs, wrapped in a cloak belonging to one of the male servants, surmounted by a broad hat with a drooping feather, and with a manly step and a fluttering heart she approached the palace. While pacing slowly to and fro, she was startled by observing a figure which also walked backwards and forwards, with folded arms. It was M. de Vallebreque. Glancing at him from beneath the shelter of her hat, she drew back still farther into the shadow of the wall; an instant's reflection overcame a momentary feeling of distrust; and she hid herself in a niche

till he was gone, resolving not to have it said that she came out at that unseemly hour to keep a secret assignation.

At last the palace awoke to its daily life, and the restless Angelica went up to one of the doors, to inquire at what hour his royal highness took his morning walk in his private gardens. The servant, somewhat surprised, answered that the Prince was then at his villa. Sick, trembling, almost fainting, Angelica paused for a moment; her dearest hopes seemed dashed to the ground, and she felt utterly discouraged. After a moment's thought, her accustomed energy suggested the only course left to her, and she resolved to go at once to the royal villa. She hired a coach, and was driven thither, a distance of some twenty miles. On her name being announced, she readily found admittance to the presence of her royal patron. Trembling, faint from fatigue and suppressed emotion, when she found herself with the Prince, she was unable to utter a syllable, and could only sink at his feet, until his kind words and offers of service restored her confidence. Then, summoning resolution, she told her story, simply, and with no attempt at concealment. His highness could not resist an inclination to exercise his wit at the expense of the beautiful cantatrice; but she was so agitated, that her usual naïveté and power of repartee were utterly gone for the time, and he could not find it in his heart to continue his badinage.

He then gravely advised her to relinquish all idea of Vallebreque; though he admitted he could allege nothing against the gallant young Frenchman except her father's disapprobation. But the good-natured Prince, touched by the grief and despair of the poor girl, whose white face and trembling frame attested her wretchedness, assured her that as she had justice and virtue on her side, he would grant her his licence for the marriage. Angelica, exulting in her success, flew to a dear female friend and despatched a messenger to inform her parents that she was safe; and before they could discover her, she had become Madame de Vallebreque; the marriage ceremony being celebrated at the Court Chapel, in the presence of the Prince Regent and General Lannes. Papa Catalani was in a towering rage, and vented his anger in no measured terms. De Vallebreque was, however, generous, and having ascertained that a pretty estate in Tuscany was for sale, he invested the first profits of his wife's professional exertions in purchasing it, and presented it to his father-in-law.

Angelica having rendered her maiden name eminent, did not adopt that of her husband in coming before the public. In 1801 she sang at La Scala, in Zingarelli's *Clitemnestra*, and in the *Baccanali di Roma* of Nasolini. From Milan she passed to Florence, to Trieste, Rome, and Naples; and was everywhere admired. She was by nature exceedingly timid, however, and her nervous-

ness unfortunately rendered her gestures somewhat spasmodic, and gave a certain wildness to her eyes in acting: indeed, her most intimate friends declared that it was as painful to her to appeâr at the Opera as it was agreeable singing at concerts.

The manager of the London Italian Opera, early in 1806, offered Madame Catalani an engagement at a salary of two hundred guineas. She accepted it, but went first to Madrid, where she was received cordially by the Queen; under whose patronage she gave several concerts, the price of admission to which was four ounces of gold for the principal places—being equal to twenty-one guineas a seat. Then passing into France, she arrived in Paris in April, 1806; sang twice at St. Cloud, and gave three public concerts, each of which produced twenty-four thousand francs: the price being trebled on these occasions. At the first concert, which took place July 22, Madame Catalani sang two airs from Cimarosa, and an air from the *Semiramide* of Portogallo—"Son Regina." At the second concert she chose an air from Nasolini's *Baccanali di Roma*, and others from the *Zaïre* and *Semiramide* of Portogallo, her favourite composer. At the third concert she added to the preceding morceaux an air of Piccini's—"Se il ciel mi divide."

Napoleon, always anxious to surround himself with great artistes, and desirous of diverting the thoughts of his Parisian subjects from matters into which he did

not wish them to inquire too minutely, spared no temptations to induce the Italian cantatrice to remain in the gay capital. He sent for her to the Tuileries, and Catalani, trembling at the idea of an interview with the Emperor, on entering his apartment, shivered like a ballerina waiting at the wings on a cold night. His Imperial Majesty was very gracious. "Où allez-vous, madame?" he asked, smiling. "To London, sire," she replied. "If you will remain in Paris," said he, "I will pay you well, and your talent will be better appreciated. You shall have a hundred thousand francs per annum, and two months for congé. Come, that is settled. Adieu, madame." The cantatrice retired, "more dead than alive," from the presence of her brusque interlocutor. She described her interview with the terrible Napoleon as having been *la plus grande émotion* she had ever experienced in her life.

At that time it was customary with vocalists, the women more particularly, to refuse a *honorarium*, in the hope that it would be replaced by some bijou of much greater value: a gift from Napoleon being the object of their ambition. Catalani did not receive this favour, but the Emperor made her a present of 5,000 francs, with a *pension* of 1,200 francs, and allowed her the use of the Opera gratuitously for her concerts. Madame Catalani, anxious to get to London, to which she looked as a rich harvest-field, and regarding the grim Napoleon as the foe of the legitimate king, was

determined not to stay. "When at Paris I was denied a passport," she afterwards said; "however, I got introduced to Talleyrand, and, by the aid of a handful of gold, I was put into a Government boat, and ordered to lie down to avoid being shot; and, wonderful to relate, I got over in safety with my little boy seven months old." She embarked at Morlaix on board a vessel which had been sent for the exchange of prisoners; the captain agreeing to take her for 150 livres.

On the 15th December, 1806, she made her début in London, with Signor Siboni, in the serious opera of *La Semiramide*, composed expressly for her by Portogallo. Her personation of the royal Assyrian was a matchless effort of tragic art. Majestic, beautiful, and queenly, her unparalleled powers literally took the musical world by storm, and "electrified" the audience. The scene where she is supposed to have seen, and to imagine herself pursued by the ghost of Ninus, proved her ability as a tragic actress: she burst upon the stage with a shrill musical shriek, exclaming, "Lascia mi, lascia mi in pace!" and her attitudes, so wild yet so graceful, her look of beautiful horror, were a triumph of lyric art. And the scene in which Assur and Semiramis mutually taunt each other with the murder of Ninus, and Semiramis blazes forth with the bravura, "I am a Queen and a warrior!" was magnificent. All the resources of her art were lavished upon it: she dropped at once a double octave, and "finally

astonished all ears by running the chromatic scale up and down, for the first time within the memory of opera-goers. This achievement sealed her reputation. It was then new; although it has since been repeated to satiety, and even noted down as an obbligato division by Rossini, Meyerbeer, and others. Rounds of applause rewarded this daring exhibition of bad taste." Her extraordinary voice created a sensation such as no singer had ever been able to make before. There was one peculiar *undulating* tone which was admired above all: it was like that of a musical glass. The note which vibrated was believed to be higher than the highest note on the pianoforte, called by the Italians "la voce di testa," and designated by English amateurs "double falsetto." Catalani, who was the only one known to have sung this note, used it with thrilling effect. "She appeared to make a sort of preparation previous to its utterance, and never approached it by the regular scale. It began with an inconceivably fine tone, which gradually swelled both in volume and power, till it 'made the ears vibrate and the heart thrill!' It particularly resembled the highest note of the nightingale, that is reiterated each time more intensely, and which, with a sort of ventriloquism, seems scarcely to proceed from the same bird that the moment before poured his delicious warblings at an interval so disjoined."

Mr. Frederick Jones, proprietor of the Dublin

Theatre, hearing of the extraordinary popularity of Madame Catalani, came to London to offer her an engagement. He made up a company, consisting of the great prima donna, Signori Morelli, Rovedino, and Deville, with Michael Kelly. There were to be two operas performed—*Semiramide*, and *Il Fanatico per la Musica*. The superb Catalani made her own terms; or rather M. de Vallebreque, who was rather fond of money, made them for her: she was to have a clear half of the receipts of each night's performance. M. de Vallebreque, though rather good-natured, and not particularly bright, was perfectly aware of the money-value of his wife's voice, and determined to use it to the utmost. Conversing one day on the style of Mrs. Salmon's singing, he exclaimed with energy, "Mrs. Salmon, sare, she is as that"—extending the little finger of his left hand, and placing his thumb at the root of it; "but, ma femme! voilà! she is that!" stretching out his whole arm at full length, and touching the shoulder-joint with the other hand. M. de Vallebreque, however, was wholly ignorant of music, and only appreciated his wife's powers by their results. Some years after this, he was one morning at rehearsal at the Italian Opera in Paris, when his "femme" complained of the piano. "I cannot possibly sing to that piano; I shall crack my voice: the piano is absurdly high." "Do not fret, my dear," interposed the husband, soothingly; "it shall be lowered before even-

ing: I will attend to it myself." Evening came, and the house was crowded; but to the consternation of the cantatrice, the pianoforte was as high as ever. She sang, but the strain was excessive and painful; and she went behind the scenes in a very bad humour. "Really, my dear," said her lord, "I cannot conceive of the piano being too high; I had the carpenter in with his saw, and made him take six inches off each leg in my presence!"

Madame Catalani, by her unfailing good-humour, her liberality, and benevolence of heart, won golden opinions; she possessed the very qualities most calculated to gain popularity among the ardent Irish; being not only charitable, but gay, and light-hearted, and ever ready to take advantage of the enjoyments of the moment. As they were passing through Bangor, she heard a Welsh harp for the first time; an old blind harper was playing in the kitchen of the house where she was temporarily lodging. She listened to him with almost infantine delight, and when he struck up a Welsh jig, unable to restrain her glee, the world-famed prima donna started up before all the servants and danced like a sprite, until, fairly tired out, and panting from exhaustion, she threw the harper two guineas, and quitted the kitchen.

On her arrival in Dublin, she was received with a real Irish *cead mille failtha*. Crowds assembled at the Rotunda to hear her, and although the prices were raised to half-

a-guinea for the pit and boxes, and five shillings for the stalls, there was scarcely standing room, and she was fêted and caressed by the best society in Dublin. These concerts were led by Mr. Cooke, a musician of very versatile talent. One morning, at rehearsal, Madame Catalani was so ill with a sick headache that she could not go through her song; and as the accompaniment was an extremely difficult one, she begged Kelly to have it rehearsed by the band. Cooke asked for the part which Madame Catalani sang, and on receiving it, placed it on one side of his music desk, having on the other his first violin part, from which he was to play; and to the great astonishment of Madame Catalani and all present, he sang every note at sight, correctly, playing at the same time his own part on the violin as leader. It was an air by Portogallo, the indifferent composer whom Madame Catalani had brought into fashion, and being in manuscript, it had never been out of the cantatrice's possession, so Cooke could not have seen it before.

In her second season in London, Catalani's salary was raised by her own demand to *five hundred* guineas; and it was calculated that in six months she received upwards of ten thousand pounds, including the Opera, festivals, concerts, and other musical performances.

Her brother Guglielmo, an indifferent performer on an instrument called the Corno Inglese, or tenor oboe, was brought over and installed in the Opera band, to

the displacement of Griesbach, a German, who had for several years filled the situation with great ability. Dissatisfaction was loudly expressed in the orchestra, and the manager, in an appeal to the public, justly complained that "the best oboe-player in Europe was to be turned out to make room for the worst." Griesbach, however, condescended to play second oboe, and used absolutely to help Guglielmo in difficult passages.

On the 19th January, 1808, Catalani appeared in a new comic opera, *La Frascatana*. She sang with "great vigour," after her usual manner; and in the "favourite song" in the second act she was twice encored. "This double encore afterwards became fashionable with regard to the singers, particularly at the English theatre," says Parke, in his *Musical Memoirs*. As none of the celebrated singers who preceded her, Mara, Banti, Grassini, or Billington, had ever received a similar compliment, this double encore appeared incomprehensible, till the fact was bruited that Catalani, as part of her contract for that season, had stipulated for the privilege of fifty orders nightly! These double encores soon ceased at the King's Theatre, but they were a few years afterwards resuscitated by Braham at Covent Garden.

On the 26th she appeared in the *Dido* of Paisiello; in which opera she gained as much applause for her acting as for her expressive singing. Nasolini's serious

opera of *La Festa di Iside* was produced for her first benefit on April 21st. In this she appeared in male attire as Sesostris, King of Egypt, and the receipts of the house were one thousand pounds. She had a second benefit on June 25th, when the entertainment was *Il Fanatico per la Musica*, in which she introduced, for the first time, Paisiello's beautiful air, "Nel cor più non mi sento," popularly known in England as "Hope told a flattering tale."

Kemble engaged Catalani in 1809, the terms being, it was said, four thousand pounds and two free benefits for the season; but just at this period, people talked loudly against giving opera-singers such enormous salaries, and the public were so enraged that he was obliged to cancel her engagement. For eight years, however, Catalani remained the favourite of the English public, whatever her demands. Her blameless domestic life, and her generosity, which often led her to dispose in charity all, or a large portion of, the sum for which she was engaged, secured for her the love of all with whom she came in contact; while those who affected to question her motives, crowded to hear her marvellous voice, and witness her unrivalled personations. An outcry was occasionally raised at the immense sums she exacted; but her husband was more to blame in this matter: he regarded managers as mere bargainers for so much marketable talents. In making a contract for her second season, her husband demanded a sum

so extravagant that the manager, aghast, declared such a salary given to one vocalist, would absolutely disable him from procuring any other performers of talent. "Talent!" echoed M. de Vallebreque; "have you not Madame Catalani? What would you have? If you want a company, my wife, with four or five puppets, is quite sufficient!" And, certainly, people no longer went to enjoy the Opera; they went to see and hear Catalani.

During the season of 1808, therefore, Madame Catalani had acted with performers who were merely puppets. She appeared in operas which were composed expressly for her, in which the part for the prima donna was elaborated to display all her best points; thus she stood alone, the whole attraction of the opera being centred in her. She certainly sang as no singer had ever sung before, with a redundant splendour which dazzled and bewildered. Her facility in inventing graces and ornaments was wonderful in spite of her ignorance, "but she took more satisfaction in producing pleasure through surprise than by any other legitimate method." Triplets, arpeggios, chromatic passages, were run through with a dexterity which astonished her hearers—a dexterity which "seemed rather the effect of natural aptitude of genius than of study and labour." She was, in truth, far more clever in running through her introduced bits of brilliant ornament than she was in singing the roulades set

down for her by the composer. So far inferior was she to both Mara and Billington in point of science, that musical performers wondered "how she could possibly dare so much, and succeed so well." With regard to her elocution in singing, "she was articulate, forcible, and powerful; occasionally light, pleasing, and playful, but never awfully grand or tenderly touching to the degree that the art may be carried." Her marvellous strains seemed to distant auditors poured forth with the fluent ease of a bird; but those who were near saw that her efforts were so great as to "call into full and violent action the muscular powers of the head, throat, and chest." In the execution of rapid passages, the under jaw was in a continual state of agitation, "in a manner, too, generally thought incompatible with the production of pure tone from the chest, and inconsistent with a legitimate execution. This extreme motion was also visible during the shake, which Catalani used sparingly, however, and with little effect."

In addition to appearing at the Opera, Catalani sang at the Ancient Concerts and other musical entertainments. Her chief defect in sacred music was a want of tenderness and pathos: "she sometimes awed, but she never warmed or melted the heart." She could not give to the sublime music of the oratorio the impressive meaning which Mara imparted. In such pieces as "Holy, holy Lord," and "I know that my

REDEEMER liveth," she never awoke feelings of devotion in the breast; though she possessed strong religious sentiments, and never entered a theatre without offering up a prayer for her success. This habit at one time led to the circulation of a spiteful anecdote. She was observed, when behind the scenes of the King's Theatre, before making her *entrée* on the stage, to repeat to herself a prayer from a missal, and then, giving the book to her attendant, to devoutly make the sign of the cross ere presenting herself to her expectant audience. The volume, it was declared, was lettered on the back METASTASIO; but the story contradicts itself; for if Catalani played such a farce, she would not have allowed herself to be detected through such an oversight.

The difference between her style and that of her two great predecessors was, it appears to us, purely mental. The mind and the emotions exercise a powerful influence over the voice, however unconsciously. "It is the soul that sings." Listen to a child, who does not think of disguising emotion; the cry of joy, the whimper of disappointment, or the scream of fear; what a variety, nay, what a totally different tone in each. It is a most painful effort to endeavour to sing while the voice is choked with tears, and it is delightful to carol under the influence of happiness. If the mind is discontented, the voice naturally becomes querulous; and a joyous heart will

indubitably testify itself in a cheerful intonation: indeed there are those who profess to read character by the tone of the voice. The secret of Catalani's inferiority to her great rivals was to be found in the simple fact, that SHE HAD NOT SUFFERED. Mara had suffered deeply, wounded in the tenderest feelings of a woman's nature. Billington had suffered, in a lesser degree, and she expressed feeling less intensely. But Catalani! Petted from childhood, adored by the man she loved, passionately beloved by her children, almost worshipped by shouting multitudes, every whim gratified by the princes and great ones of the earth, and her days passed in a succession of triumphs; how was she to pour forth the thrilling tones which express musical pathos? To have the power of drawing tears, we must have shed them. To reach the heart, to awaken the sympathies of a crowd, each one of whom has, more or less, suffered, is a gift acquired only by the sad experience which enables the mind to enter into the spirit of ideal sorrows.

The immense volume of Catalani's voice was not liked by some. Queen Charlotte, being asked her opinion, replied with German emphasis: "I was wishing for a little cotton in my ears all the time." The predominating impression on the mind was its overpowering, almost terrific loudness. "When rushing up the scale, every note seems to increase in force till the melody is lost," says one critic; "and the ear

is positively pained by the strain upon its auditory nerve. There is no term in the vocabulary of music to convey an adequate idea of the excess of loudness." Some wit was asked if he would go to York to hear her. "I shall hear her better where I am," he answered.

By 1812 the public had acquired such a taste for the music of Mozart, that Catalani was obliged to give way to the fashion; though she disliked the works of that great composer, because, when singing his music, she was forced to attend to time, and was kept under the control of the orchestra. She appeared in two of his operas; as Vitellia in *La Clemenza di Tito*, and as Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro;* and sang the music of both parts exquisitely. Arch, lively, piquant as the waiting-woman; lofty, impassioned, haughty, and grand, as the patrician dame of ancient Rome; she adapted her expressive countenance to both: in serious opera she was majestic and forcible; in comic, natural, playful, and graceful. Mrs. Dickons performed the Countess Almaviva, and in some scenes she almost rivalled the magnificent Italian. Trammezzani, the delightful tenor, who had arrived in England a few seasons previously, refused the part of Count Almaviva, because he considered it beneath his dignity to appear in comic opera! In *La Clemenza di Tito*, the part of Sesto, written for a soprano voice, was taken by Trammezzani. He was very handsome, and

had a voice of the sweetest quality, "of that rich, touching Cremona tone peculiar to the Italians," and was withal full of animation and feeling.

In 1813, the last season of her regular engagement on the Opera stage, Madame Catalani began to push her habit of deviating from the beaten track of art to a pitch of folly that was unendurable to those who appreciated pure music. Variations for the violin on "God save the King," "Rule Britannia," "Cease your funning," and other English songs, became her chief repertoire, and were received with delight and amazement by the general public. She was idolized by those who cared only for gratifying the idle curiosity of the moment. The card on which were inscribed the words of "God save the King" for Madame Catalani to sing was a curiosity. The following version of the words was supposed to make them more easy for her to pronounce them:—

"O Lord avar God,
Arais, schaetar
Is enemis, and
Mece them fol.
Confond tear
Politekse, frosstre
Tear nevise trix,
On George avar hopes
We fix, God save te
Kin."

In the beginning of this season, her salary having

fallen into arrears, her husband advised her not to appear till it was paid; accordingly, one night—the 1st June—she chose not to attend the theatre. The audience, exasperated, raised a furious uproar, which was long remembered as one of the most extraordinary in all its circumstances that had ever been known. *Enrico IV.* had been announced; it was a Saturday night, and the house was crowded. There was no other announcement except one on the bills, stating simply that Madame Catalani had withdrawn from the theatre. The opera which had been substituted having been gone through amid a hurricane of clamour, the ballet commenced, amid the hisses of some, the cries of many, and the inattention of the majority; the galleries alone seeming inclined for quiet. The pit had filled at half-price, and the riot soon became portentous. The first mutterings of the coming tempest were perceptible in the shaking of a side-scene, which alarmed a child ensconced in a basket of osiers and laurels, and who jumped out and ran away. The audience at once became aware that there was a disturbance behind the scenes, and the ballet-girls looked towards the scuffle with affright. The guard were trying to prevent some persons from rushing on to the stage; which in an instant was covered with gentlemen, who, from the general mourning for the Duchess of Brunswick, presented a very sombre aspect. The dancers immediately

withdrew, the utmost confusion ensued, and the curtain was dropped; but some of the invading gentlemen came before it, and strutted about, flourishing their canes, and waving laurels, the spoliation of the stage. The curtain, being apparently in danger, was again raised, and the confusion became frightful: cries for the manager, shrieks of applause for the bold invaders; cries of "Off! off!" were mingled with yells, howls, groans, and hisses. At length a person came forward, and having with difficulty obtained a temporary silence, said that everything should be done to satisfy the nobility and gentry; but he was told that nothing would satisfy them but the appearance of Catalani. He then retired, and the soldiers made their way on the stage, and formed in line, when an attack was instantly directed on a few who were separated from their comrades, and the rioters endeavoured to wrest their arms from them. The most fatal results were feared, but the forbearance of the soldiers was most praiseworthy. The gentlemen seized the muskets, drew out and flourished the bayonets, and then flung the firearms into the orchestra among the lamps and desks. The soldiers were then withdrawn. The musicians had fled early in the affray, with every violin, bassoon, and trombone, and all the music-books. A ludicrous scene ensued: the valiant beaux were all lounging over the side-boxes, shaking hands with the ladies, or bowing to those above who showed their

approbation. First Mr. Kinnaird and then John Kemble came forward to make speeches, which were hailed with ironical plaudits; and at last the famous Romeo Coates started up and made one of his absurd orations, which dispersed the audience.

Towards the close of this season several good singers appeared; but Catalani's insatiate desire to be the alpha and omega of the operatic world induced her to behave in such an intolerable manner towards them that half the company quitted the King's Theatre, and established themselves at the Pantheon; which had been rebuilt. Signora Bertinotti, Signora Collini, the two Cauvinis, the aged Morelli, and a few others, formed the troupe, with Miss Stephens, the charming English débutante. Unfortunately the licence of the place was only for intermezzos, or operas of one act, and dancing without ballets of action; therefore, the performances did not prove very attractive. Moreover, a report was industriously circulated and published in the newspapers, with the attestation of an architect, that the external walls, shaken by fire, were unequal to supporting the new roof which had been erected upon them, and that the building was unsafe. The entertainments consequently ceased, and the company dispersed.

The public were dissatisfied with having Catalani and nothing but Catalani; but the managers were unable, because of her exorbitant demands and her

unwarrantable jealousy, to engage any other vocalists. She offered to purchase the theatre, intending to become thus sole proprietor, sole manager, and sole performer; but she fortunately failed in this, for she would probably have finished by becoming sole auditor. Her relations with the director became each day more embittered, and she feared to disgust the public altogether; she therefore repaired to Paris, to join in the festivities consequent on the entry of the Allies, having realized fifty thousand pounds.

On arriving in Paris, in 1814, she found herself supremely popular, on account of her acknowledged antipathy to Napoleon and her sympathy with the King. On the 4th February, 1815, she gave a grand concert at the Opera-house for the benefit of the poor. During the Hundred Days, she followed Louis XVIII. to Ghent: she had become known to the King in England, and now made her house at Ghent a resort for the most illustrious émigrés. After a second sojourn in Paris, she made a tour through Holland and Belgium. On her return to Paris, Louis XVIII., flattered by the devotion Madame Catalani always professed for his cause, bestowed on her the privilege of the Italian theatre, with a grant of 160,000 francs. She established her company in the Salle Favart, and commenced operations with vigour; but two things militated against her success as a manager—her own desire for supreme power, and her husband's greed of

money: she must reign alone, without a rival. The consequence was that she not only found herself obliged to precipitately relinquish her dangerous post, but lost 500,000 francs of her fortune, and also the good graces of the Parisians.

With the hope of retrieving her losses, she commenced a tour through Europe. In 1816, she gave seven concerts in Berlin, the price of the tickets being three thalers. She gave an eighth in the church, for the poor, tickets being one thaler and a half. Every concert was crowded; the building was so full that there was scarce standing room, and the directors received more than 5,000 thalers. In 1817 she visited Venice, the scene of her earliest triumphs; indeed she sang in almost every town on the Continent, accompanied by her husband, her pupil, Miss Corri, and a very bad tenor named Rolaffi. Everywhere she was received with the most extraordinary delight; she was petted by princes of the blood royal, and loaded with gorgeous presents, jewels, medals, and testimonials. The King of Prussia wrote her an autograph letter of compliment, accompanied by the grand medal of the Academy; the Emperor of Austria presented her with a superb ornament of opals and diamonds; while the magistracy of Vienna, in token of their gratitude for her munificence to the charitable institutions of that capital, struck a medal in her honour. Even sovereign princes paid her the most obsequious attentions:

the Grand Duke of Darmstadt took his seat in the orchestra of the theatre as leader of the band, in honour of her genius; and her name was among the last words uttered by the dying King of Wirtemberg. Fabulous sums were paid for her performances, and crowds assembled to listen to her marvellous, though now unmeaning exhibitions. She had such an overweening idea of her own gifts, that her self-conceit was laughable. When she visited Hamburg for the first time, in 1819, M. Schevenke, the chief musician of that city, criticized her vocal feats with great severity; Madame Catalani, on being told of this, shrugged her shoulders, and called him "an impious man." "For," she said, with a droll naïveté, "when God has given to a mortal so extraordinary a talent as I possess, people ought to applaud and honour it as a miracle: it is profane to depreciate the gifts of Heaven!"

In private society she was cordially welcomed, and acquitted herself very well; but occasionally her ignorance of what everybody else was intimate with, led her into somewhat ludicrous predicaments. Dining one evening at the Court of Weimar, she was seated beside the great poet Goethe, as a mark of respect on the part of her Royal host. Knowing nothing of Goethe, but remarking his majestic appearance and the universal attention which he received, she inquired carelessly of the gentleman on the other side, what was

his name? "The celebrated Goethè, madame," was the reply. "Pray, on what instrument does he play?" "He is no performer, madam—he is the renowned author of *Werter*." "Oh, yes, yes, I remember," she said; then turning to the venerable poet, she addressed him, in her vivacious manner. "Ah, sir, what an admirer I am of *Werter!*" Flattered by her evident sincerity and ardour, the poet bowed profoundly. "I never," continued she, in the same lively strain, "I never read anything half so laughable in all my life. What a capital farce it is, sir!" The poet, astounded, could scarcely believe the evidence of his ears. "*The Sorrows of Werter* a farce!" he murmured, faintly. "Oh, yes, never was anything so exquisitely ridiculous," rejoined Catalani, with a ringing burst of laughter; for she remembered the absurd parody of *Werter*, which had been performed at one of the minor theatres of Paris, and in which the sentiments of Goethe's work had been turned into the most ludicrous burlesque. Mortified and disconcerted, poor Goethe did not recover himself the entire evening; and Catalani was regarded with less respect during the remainder of her stay at the Court of Weimar.

In August, 1817, she reappeared in Paris, in *Il Fanatico per la Musica*, at the Théâtre Italien, and was warmly welcomed. All the boxes were retained long before the night of her *rentrée*, the 17th. She appeared subsequently in *Il Matrimonio Segreto*, *Così fan Tutte*,

Le Cantatrici Villane, *Il Matrimonio per Raggiro*, *Semiramis* (with Garcia, Mdlle. Berayter, and Benelli), *L'Italiana in Algieri*, *La Sposa Stravagante* (in which she performed Lindora), *La Principessa in Campagno*, and *Mithridate;* in which last she performed Monime, and Trammezzani Mithridates. There were two grand concerts during the season: the first in November, when Catalani sang "Gratias agimus," accompanied on the clarionet by M. Dacosta, and two airs by Pucitta and Mozart; the second took place at the close of the season, in December.

Madame Catalani returned to England in 1821; and in the winter of 1821–22 made a tour through the country, visiting Bath, Bristol, Glasgow, Edinburgh, York, and other places. At Bath she gained nearly five hundred pounds, while the conductor, Mr. Ashe, was a loser of two hundred; at Bristol she made the same, the conductor just escaping loss; at Glasgow, the receipts were 2,300*l.*, and the payments 2,100*l.*, of which Catalani received 760*l.*, Mrs. Salmon, 260*l.*, Braham, 250*l.*; so that if no minor expenses were defrayed, there remained only 200*l.* for the charity in behalf of which the concerts were held. In 1822, Catalani undertook a series of concerts, which were attended by upwards of a thousand persons, the orchestra being itself always crowded with auditors. At these concerts, she introduced a splendid song, "Della superba Roma," by the Marquis Sampieri,

"which electrified the audience." At a rehearsal at the Argyll Rooms, the younger Linley was so astonished by the grandeur with which this song burst from her lips, that he forgot his own part, and played a wrong note; Catalani turned and made some severe remark to him, when, overcome by his emotions, he fell from his seat in a swoon.

After her English and Scottish tour, she went again on the Continent. At St. Petersburg, in 1823, she was unprecedentedly popular, and realized about fifteen thousand guineas in four months. There being no concert-room sufficiently large to accommodate the crowds that flocked to hear her, she chose the public Exchange for the scene of her concluding concert, when there were more than four thousand persons present. The large receipts of that evening were devoted by her to relieving two hundred unfortunate families in Russia; for this, Alexander thanked her before his Court, he and the Empress embraced her at parting, and loaded her with regal ornaments, amongst which a girdle of diamonds was conspicuous.

Madame Catalani was engaged by Mr. Waters for the King's Theatre in 1824, for a certain number of nights. She made her reappearance in Mayer's comic opera, *Il Fanatico per la Musica*, converted into a mere vehicle for the display of her vocal *tours de force*; almost all the music being mutilated to make room for her show pieces. She did not think it worth while

to keep up even a pretence of sustaining a part, but walked on and off the stage, hardly acknowledging the presence of those who had the misfortune to sing with her. A crowded audience assembled to welcome her, and so touched was she by the ovation that she could not conceal her emotion. It was noticed that there was a "slight embarrassment and incertitude" in her manner, which was attributed to her having for so long a time discontinued to appear in opera; and it was not till the second night of her appearance that she recovered her self-possession, when she surpassed herself in the transcendent power of her performance. Mesdames Caradori and Ronzi de Begnis performed with her in this opera, with Curioni and Signor de Begnis.

It was agreed that she had wonderfully improved in one respect since she last sung in opera: her voice was more resplendent than ever; its tones were so powerful that the hearer needed to be at a distance to enjoy them. But alas! in that very power were tokens of the destroying hand of time; the "fragrance" of her tone, as one critic termed it, had in some degree evaporated. It was compared to a copper-gilt vessel from which some of the gilding has worn off—or rather it was like a pianoforte, the hammers of which are grown hard by use. In her appearance, too, she had altered; but favourably: always the handsomest woman in Europe, she had become, by an accession

of embonpoint, more beautiful and majestic. On the stage and in society, her popularity for the time was unbounded; and she achieved a little triumph about this period, which must have been highly gratifying to her, satiated as she was by the plaudits of the greatest in the land. When Captain Montague was cruising off Brighton, she was invited, with some other ladies, to a fête on board his frigate, and the ladies were escorted on board by the captain in a boat manned by twenty men. On the way to the ship, the prima donna suddenly burst forth with her pet song, "Rule Britannia." The sailors, taken by surprise, rested on their oars to listen, and tears sprang to the eyes of more than one weather-beaten old tar. "You see, madame," said the captain, "the effect this favourite air has upon these brave men, when sung by the finest voice in the world. I have been in many victorious battles, but never felt any excitement equal to this." On arriving on board, the sailors entreated her to sing the air once more, a request which she readily complied with, and the gallant tars, on her quitting the ship in the evening, cheered her until she reached the shore.

At first the public applauded her to the echo; but soon her hearers began to weary of the reiterated extravagances of her style of singing, and the enthusiasm at length died out. Night after night the

audience grew thinner at the Opera-house, and at last she retreated from the stage, and restricted herself to the concert-room, where she sought only to make a display of vocal feats. Her deportment was changed equally with her style and her person; all was exaggeration: her style had become a caricature of its former grandeur. "When she begins one of the interminable roulades up the scale," says a writer in *Knight's Quarterly Magazine*, "she gradually raises her body, which she had before stooped to almost a level with the ground, until, having won her way with a quivering lip and chattering chin to the very topmost note, she tosses back her head and all its nodding feathers with an air of triumph; then suddenly falls to a note two octaves and a half lower with incredible aplomb, and smiles like a victorious Amazon over a conquered enemy." A throng of flatterers joined in encouraging her in all her defects. "No sooner does Catalani quit the orchestra," says the same writer, "than she is beset by a host of foreign sycophants, who load her with exaggerated praise. I was present at a scene of this kind in the refreshment room at Bath, and heard reiterated on all sides, 'Ah, madame! la dernière fois toujours la meilleure!' Thus is poor Madame Catalani led to strive to excel herself, every time she sings, until she exposes herself to the ridicule most probably of those very flatterers; for I have heard that on the Continent she is

mimicked by a man dressed in female attire, who represents, by extravagant terms and gestures, Madame Catalani *surpassing* herself." * Occasionally, however, she showed that her genius had not forsaken her. Her singing of Luther's Hymn is thus described by an appreciative listener. "She admits in this grandly simple composition no ornament whatever, but a pure shake at the conclusion. The majesty of her sustained tones, so rich, so ample, as not only to fill but overflow the cathedral where I heard her—the solemnity of her manner, and the St. Cecilia-like expression of her raised eyes and rapt countenance, produced a thrilling effect through the united medium of sight and hearing. Whoever has heard Catalani sing this, accompanied by Schmidt on the trumpet, has heard the utmost that music can do. Then in the succeeding chorus, when the same awful words, 'The trumpet sounds; the graves restore the dead which they contained before,' are repeated by the whole choral strength, her voice piercing through the clang of instruments and the burst of other voices, is heard as distinctly as if it were alone! During the encore I found my way to the top of a

* In 1825, a German singer named Keller created a great sensation at Dresden in the part of "Die Falsche Katalani" (the False Catalani), wherein his extraordinary falsetto was called most effectually into play in the imitation of the distinguished Italian. The manner in which he imitated the various styles of Italian singing, and especially the laborious fidelity with which he gave the well-known variations by Rode as executed by Catalani, was absolutely marvellous.

tower on the outside of the cathedral, and could still distinguish her wonderful voice."

But this was a rare exception. Her excessive love of ornament proved a fatal stumbling-block, and ruined the beauty of this matchless voice. She cared for no simple air. Her delight was to take a bold and spirited piece, such as "Non più andrai," even when written for a bass voice, in which she could bear down and overpower by sheer force of lungs the brazen instruments of the orchestra, amid rapturous thunders of applause. She preferred the music of the most inferior composers, written expressly for her, to the most exquisite productions of the greatest masters; which was greatly to be regretted, for all agreed that she could have become a perfect performer, had her noble gifts been guided by sound taste and judgment. She had a peculiar facility in running chromatic passages, placing on each note a trill which scintillated like a diamond in limpid water; she excelled in effects of contrast—now loud as an organ, then soft and penetrating as the lowest notes of the nightingale; and her skill in "jumping" over two octaves at once, her rapidity in divisions, and the almost supernatural volume of tone which her throat was capable of throwing forth, created an increasing wonder. Her fantastical luxuriance and redundancy, her reckless daring, her defiance of all rules, disgusted connoisseurs as much as it astounded and charmed the multitude. In Paris,

the epigrams of the day designated her voice "l'instrument Catalani." "Whenever I hear such an outrageous display of execution," said Mount Edgecumbe, "I never fail to recollect, and cordially join in, the opinion of a late noble statesman, more famous for his wit than for his love of music, who, hearing a remark on the extreme difficulty of some performance, observed that he wished that it was impossible." But, unfortunately for the soundness of his musical taste, this nobleman (Lord North) was the individual who, when asked why he did not subscribe to the Ancient Concerts, and reminded that his brother, the Bishop of Winchester, did, replied: "Oh, if I was as deaf as my brother, I would subscribe too."

Although she began to give dissatisfaction to the critics, the public were as faithful as ever to Catalani, and she made enormous sums. But she was very generous in affording help to others. At a concert given by Mr. Loder, of Bath, a most talented musician, distinguished for his skill as a violinist and a leader, Madame Catalani sang under an engagement at a large fee, and the concert was completely successful; but she refused to accept the sum stipulated for, relinquishing it as a mark of her esteem for the ability and general merit of the worthy conductor. When she performed for a benefit, she would frequently return the whole, or a large portion, of the amount for which she was engaged, and she was very liberal

towards public charities. On the occasion of a great musical performance for the benefit of the Westminster Hospital, in 1821, she was solicited to contribute her services, but replied that were she to do so, she would injure her own concerts; yet, on the day of her first concert, she transmitted to the committee, as a gift, about three hundred pounds, the proceeds of her performance. She sang for Kelly on one occasion, but did not realize much for him, as the crowd was so great that the doors were broken down and the pit crammed to suffocation with non-paying visitors: the return in money was only twenty-five pounds. The unlucky beneficiaire made a request that the price of admission should be sent to the box-office the next day by those who entered without paying, but not a single person responded to this appeal.

In May, 1824, her own concerts drew very large audiences: curiosity, and a rumour that the concerts would not exceed three or four, and that after their termination the enchantress would be heard no more, conduced to render the sale of tickets rapid: the first four nights there were more than a thousand sold. On the first night the audience began to assemble more than an hour before the doors were open, and the room filled in two minutes; the orchestra even being filled with ladies and gentlemen, the musicians retiring behind. Each night Madame Catalani sang four songs in various styles. At the end of February,

1825, she commenced a series of fortnightly concerts, conducted by Mr. P. Cianchettini. The first was but thinly attended, but afterwards the Argyll Rooms were crowded to excess. Mrs. Salmon and Mr. Sapio were the principal coadjutors, with the occasional assistance of M. Begrez and other performers; and one evening Signor Pistrucci, the celebrated improvisatore, appeared. Catalani herself sang six pieces every evening, comprehending all styles, from "Home, sweet home," and "Rule Britannia," to "Gratias agimus," and Mr. Cianchettini's *Mazurka*.

In 1825, she visited Paris, and appeared in the *Salle Cléry;* but the taste of the Parisians had been purified by Fodor and Pasta, and they did not care any longer for Catalani. In other cities on the Continent she was received with more favour. In 1827, Charles John of Sweden conducted her through the Royal Museum at Stockholm himself, when two magnificent vases of porphyry attracted her notice and admiration; some time after, a similar pair was forwarded to her at Paris by the gallant Prince, who deemed twenty thousand francs a not too costly tribute to the enchanting singer. In the summer of 1827 she sang in Berlin, where she did not hesitate to appear in rivalry with the young and fresh vocalist Sontag.

Returning to England in the summer of that year, she was engaged at extravagant salaries to sing at various musical festivals. At Derby, there was much

apprehension as to the state of her voice and execution; as, considering the sum she received, her engagement there was looked on as a failure. And it was found that "the liquidity of her tone had given way to the force of effort." Her evening songs were generally miserable effusions, to which, wisely, no composer's name was affixed, and her sacred singing was totally unlike what it had been: in "Holy, holy Lord," she wandered far from the pitch, and disfigured the *Messiah* by the introduction of "Gratias agimus." At York she was offered the sum of six hundred guineas for her services; or rather for the sake of her name, for she was unable to maintain her reputation.

The critics dropped many hints, urging that it would be the most judicious, as well as the most dignified course, to retire; and she did retire altogether in 1831, and went to reside on a noble estate near the Lago di Como, where she built a beautiful villa. Three children, two of whom were born in England, and one in Paris, had blessed the happy union of Angelica and her "bel uffiziale." Her daughter (Madame Vivie) and her eldest son, who adored their mother, lived at home; the second son being in the army, was very much with his regiment: this young man afterwards became equerry to Napoleon III.

Madame Catalani founded, in the vicinity of her home, a school of gratuitous instruction in singing for young girls, where they had lodging, board, and

clothing, and at the end of a certain time of instruction engagements were obtained for the pupils. One of the stipulations exacted of the scholars was rather curious—that on quitting the establishment at the expiration of their term they should add to their family name that of Catalani. The first singer among them who became known was Signora Maselli-Catalani, who appeared at Paris.

Some years after the retirement of the great songstress, Mrs. Trollope, then on a tour through Italy, visited her. "Nothing could be more amiable than the reception she gave us." She expressed a great admiration and love for the English. Her beauty was little injured. "Her eyes and teeth are still magnificent," says Mrs. Trollope, "and I am told that when seen in evening full dress by candlelight, no stranger can see her for the first time without inquiring who that charming-looking woman is." Mrs. Trollope hinted to Mdlle. de Vallebreque that she would like to hear her mother sing; and in a moment Madame Catalani was at the piano, smiling at the whispered request from her daughter. "I know not what it was she sang, but scarcely had she permitted her voice to swell into one of those bravura passages, of which her execution was so very peculiar, and so perfectly unequalled, than I felt as if some magic process was being performed upon me, which took me back again to something—I know not what to call it—which I had neither heard

nor felt for nearly twenty years. Involuntarily, unconsciously, my eyes filled with tears, and I felt as much embarrassed as a young lady of fifteen might be, who suddenly found herself in the act of betraying emotions which she was far indeed from wishing to display." William Gardiner visited Madame Catalani in 1846. "I was surprised at the vigour of Madame Catalani," he says, "and how little she was altered since I saw her at Derby in 1828. I paid her a compliment upon her good looks. 'Ah,' said she, 'I'm grown old and ugly.' I would not allow it. 'Why, man,' she said, 'I'm sixty-six!' She has lost none of that commanding expression which gave her such dignity on the stage. She is without a wrinkle, and appears to be no more than forty. Her breadth of chest is still remarkable: it was this which endowed her with the finest voice that ever sang. Her speaking voice and dramatic air are still charming, and not in the least impaired."

For about five years before Madame Catalani's death, reports of her decease, and of the gigantic fortune she was supposed to have left, were continually appearing in the papers. In 1844, it was said that she had died worth 382,000*l*., and that she had lost her husband in 1838; a report which was laughed over at a dinner by herself, M. de Vallebreque, and a party of friends. In 1848, the cholera breaking out with violence in the neighbourhood of Florence, Catalani took refuge

in Paris with her children; and while residing here, she heard Jenny Lind at a concert given by Lord Normanby. Some days after the entertainment, she was sitting alone, when a strange lady called on her; the visitor refused to give her name, but was ushered into the room. Catalani rose; and the stranger advanced timidly. She was young, not handsome, but with an expressive face, over which played a most agreeable smile. "I am Jenny Lind, madame," she said, after a little preliminary dialogue. "I am come for your blessing." It was given. They never met again, for Catalani was carried off in a few days by the remorseless epidemic from which she had fled. She died on the 12th June, at the age of sixty-nine.

CHAPTER XVI.

JOSEPHINE MAINVILLE FODOR.

JOSEPHINE FODOR was the daughter of Joseph Fodor, a forgotten composer of some talent. She was born, 1793, in Paris; and soon after her father obtained an engagement at St. Petersburg. Of her early life and musical training all that we know is, that she made her formal début in 1810 in the Imperial Theatre, in the *Cantatrici Villane* of Fioravanti, in which she appeared seventy times. She was nineteen when M. Mainville, an actor attached to the Théâtre Français in the service of the Court of Russia, offered her his hand; and they were married. But unluckily for the young couple, the Emperor Alexander chose to suppress the troupes of foreign performers at this period; and the pair were obliged to seek their fortune elsewhere. Madame Mainville Fodor gained an opportunity of singing at Stockholm and at Copenhagen; then she went to Paris, where she made her appearance, in 1814, at the Opéra Comique. When Madame Catalani, in 1815, commenced her unfortunate speculation at the Salle Favart,

Madame Fodor was engaged with Garcia, Crivelli, Porto, and other performers. The jealous directress, unable to tolerate rivals, soon disgusted the artistes whom she had engaged, and they simultaneously threw up their engagements, and came to London.

The season of 1816 at the King's Theatre was long remembered as a brilliant one: it introduced Madame Vestris and Madame Fodor to the English public, and was successful as regarded performers, performances, and receipts. Mr. Ayrton, to whom the management had been committed by Waters, the proprietor, had gathered together a company composed of Spanish, French, Italian, and English vocalists. The other leading singers were Mesdames Camporese and Pasta, Crivelli, Begrez, Naldi, Angrisani, and Ambrogetti.

On the 17th January, Madame Fodor made her first curtsey to a British audience in her favourite opera, *Griselda*. She had come almost unheralded, for the frequenters of the King's Theatre knew very little of her until they saw her name announced. She displayed great sweetness of voice and delicacy of expression; and the public and the critics were equally pleased. Her second part was that of Ceres, in Winter's opera, in which she completely gained the favour of the public.

A great excitement was caused by the production of Mozart's serious opera, *La Clemenza di Tito*, on March 2. Braham, who had been announced from the

beginning of the season, appeared, after an absence of ten years from the stage of the King's Theatre. When he entered on the scene, he "showed some signs of diffidence," owing, probably, to his not having met the opera audience for so long a time; and some slight marks of disapprobation were heard, but they were overpowered by the plaudits of his friends and the public. Madame Fodor was greatly admired in this opera. She took, however, some very unwarrantable liberties with the part, and particularly desired to commence with a song, in which she anticipated making a great impression, but which the composer had placed at the end of the second act. Ayrton objected that this was absurd, since in the song the heroine, being exiled, bids adieu to her friends, so the transposition would have the effect of making the farewell precede the banishment. But Madame Fodor persisted, and appealed to Signor Vestris, then poet of the King's Theatre, who said that the change was of no consequence, as the unity of the opera had long been completely ruined on the Continent. Ayrton indignantly responded, that if the opera was spoiled abroad, that was no reason why it should be injured in England. Madame Fodor, however, applied to the directors of the theatre, and obtained from them a written permission to do as she liked. Crivelli did the same with some of his music in this unlucky opera.

Mozart's far-famed opera, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, was

produced June 22nd, to the great delight of the musical world. Perhaps Madame Fodor was never heard to more advantage than in this masterpiece; all her songs and her duets were executed with extreme purity, delicacy, and expression. Levasseur was a sardonic-looking Almaviva, and though he sang excellently, he yet made love like a cynic, which did not please the audience. Naldi and Madame Vestris were admirable. The theatre closed August 10th, after a most prosperous season, to the pecuniary success of which the numerous officers, naval and military, who had come home, and the multitude of foreigners which the peace had permitted to roam through England in quest of pleasure, in no small degree contributed.

In 1817, a spirited attempt was made by Mr. Ayrton to effect some important reforms in the administration of the theatre. He endeavoured to break through the trammels and tyranny of the singers and dancers, and to present the public with the masterpieces of the great German and Italian composers; but he met with numerous and insurmountable obstacles, and, like too many other reformers, failed. The performers were the same as in the preceding year; and the theatre was opened the 11th January, with *Griselda*. Madame Fodor performed with much pathos, and the delicacy and purity of her singing were fully appreciated. Madame Pasta appeared in the opera, and rendered powerful support to Madame Fodor. The *Nozze di*

Figaro was next produced, Ambrogetti personating the Count with great success. Madame Fodor was the Countess, Madame Camporese Susanna, Madame Pasta the Page, and Naldi Figaro. Such a cast left nothing to be desired.

The success of the *Figaro* induced Mr. Ayrton to bring forward *Don Giovanni*, the triumphant success of which forms an era in the history of the theatre. Madame Fodor made a charming Zerlina; the lightness and delicacy of her expression, the simplicity, sweetness, and tenderness of her acting were universally admitted. Ambrogetti, though not distinguished for his attainments as a singer, threw into his performance of Don Giovanni so much fire and animation, that the popularity of the opera was established. Madame Camporese performed Donna Anna, and Naldi was a very lively Leporello. The scenery also was beautiful.

During this season, Madame Fodor sang at the Concerts of Ancient Music on alternate nights with Madame Camporese.

In 1818, Madame Fodor was again engaged at the King's Theatre. The season opened with Paer's *Griselda*, in which Madame Fodor had made her first appearance in England; and the part was well adapted to her talent. "If wanting the sweetness, mellowness, and expression of an Italian," says one critic, "her voice is marvellous for a French voice; she is never outrageous, never urges her tones into

clamour, or her visage into convulsions; seldom degenerates into the commonplace of that contortion which the French call a smile." Paisiello's sweet but feeble opera, *La Molinara*, was next produced. Fodor personated the Miller's Maid: a class of character much better suited to her talents than tragic heroines. *Le Nozze di Figaro* was performed again this season, Madame Fodor exchanging the part of the Countess for that of Susanna; and with due allowance for the disadvantages of her figure, which was not suited to the character, she gave it admirably. *Don Giovanni* was also performed—superbly; Madame Fodor again taking the then subordinate part of Zerlina, in which she achieved a triumphant success.

Il Barbiere di Seviglia, the first of Rossini's operas offered to British ears, was next brought out, when Garcia made his début in England as the Count Almaviva. He was tall, handsome, and of a fine figure, with animated, fiery action, and a voice of singular sweetness and flexibility. Madame Fodor was the Rosina; Ambrogetti, Dr. Bartolo; and Naldi, Figaro. On the 30th April, Rossini's *Elisabetta* was brought forward for the benefit of Madame Fodor, who appeared to advantage as the regal heroine, and sang in her best style. Madame Fodor also performed Carolina in *Il Matrimonio Segreto*.

In the month of July, 1818, Madame Fodor went to Italy, where she studied assiduously, and suc-

ceeded in rendering her voice supple and sweet, and acquiring a peculiarly "honeyed" tone. She was engaged at Venice, where she was heard for the first time in the *Elisabetta* of Caraffa, which she performed thirty-eight times successively. She gained a complete triumph; being crowned on the stage after her first appearance, and recalled many times each evening amid an uproar of delight. The principal dilettanti of Venice had a gold medal struck in her honour.

The Italian Theatre of Paris, ruined by the bad administration of Madame Catalani, was reorganized at the commencement of 1819, when Madame Fodor was engaged and appeared in the May of that year. Then commenced the brilliant period of her career: her talent had become completely developed, and in the *Agnese* of Paer, *Il Matrimonio Segreto*, *Don Giovanni*, *Il Barbiere di Seviglia*, and *La Gazza Ladra*, she achieved a series of triumphs which lasted for three years. She was not remarkable for elevation of style nor for passionate fervour, but for accurate intonation, great purity of tone, much perfection in details, and an irresistible charm in her accentuation. Count Stendhal sarcastically characterized her as a sublime bird-organ. *Il Barbiere* had not much success on its first representation at the Italian theatre at Paris, but on the second it became extremely popular, when Madame Fodor took the place of Madame Ronzi di

Begnis as Rosina, and made the beautiful creation of Rossini understood by the Parisians.

During the latter part of her stay in Paris, the health of Madame Fodor was much affected by an internal disorder, which had no influence on the purity of her voice, but which prostrated her bodily strength; and her physicians advising a tour in Italy, she resolved to try the change of air. She took her leave of the Parisians in *Elisabetta*, in March, 1822, and left for Naples in April. The effect of the lovely climate of Naples was prompt and salutary, and the French cantatrice made her appearance at San Carlo in *Otello*, the August of the same year. The enthusiasm of the Neapolitans equalled that of the Venetians and the Parisians; she performed in *Semiramide*, *Zelmira*, and many other operas, concluding a most successful engagement February 8, 1823.

From Naples Madame Fodor went to Vienna, with her impresario, Barbaja, who was obliged to relinquish the San Carlo, but who did not choose to give up his splendid company. During the second performance of *Otello*, at the Kärnthnerthor Theatre, Madame Fodor was seized with a fit while singing the duet with Emilia. The performance was suspended for the evening, but the next night she reappeared in the same opera. She sang during the entire season, with Fanny Eckerlin, the two Davides, Donzelli, and the bass singers Ambrogi, Bassi, and Lablache. She performed princi-

MADAME PASTA

(AS MEDEA)

Engraved by J.C. Armytage from a Sketch by John Hayter

London: Published by Smith Elder & Co. 65 Cornhill 1843

pally in the works of Rossini, and was exceedingly popular, despite the counter-attractions of Sontag, of Mombelli, and the other *prime donne* attached to the company. Her Semiramide was so greatly admired that she performed it sixty times successively, with immense applause. Returning to Naples, she was engaged at the Opera till August, 1825, when she retraced her steps to Paris to fulfil a contract made with M. le Vicomte de la Rochefoucauld, Directeur-Général des Beaux Arts.

She was then in the zenith of her fame, and her voice might be said to have attained its fullest development. No sooner had she made her appearance in Paris, than the horizon of the Théâtre Italien became overcast. Rossini's *Semiramide* had been chosen for the benefit of Madame Pasta, who naturally understood that she was to perform the principal part in the opera, it being one of her finest characters; but, at rehearsal, the rôle of Arsace was allotted to Pasta, and that of the Queen of Babylon given to Fodor. A quarrel, vehement, long, and bitter, was the result; but Madame Fodor would not yield; she said that Madame Pasta might perform Semiramide after her début, but not before. The Parisians were almost universally on the side of Pasta, who, it is certain, was treated in the most unhandsome manner by M. le Vicomte.

The dispute was ended by Madame Fodor's appearing at the Théâtre Italien, the 9th December, 1825,

in Rossini's *Semiramide*, which was as yet unknown to Paris. The boxes, pit, gallery, and stalls were crammed, and the whole musical world of Paris was present, with many musical celebrities of the day—Rossini, Cherubini, Choron, and others, who anticipated a brilliant triumph for the prima donna. Galli, Bordogni, and Mdlle. Schiassetti were to sing with her. The audience greeted Madame Fodor with the most flattering enthusiasm. The voice of *la prima delle prime donne*, as the Italians called her, was in excellent order, though she was suffering from almost overpowering timidity, unaccountable in so practised a performer; and she went through the first scene of the opera in a style which excited the audience to a pitch of almost delirious delight. On her reappearance in the next scene, she had not proceeded beyond the fifth or sixth bar of the first air, when her voice suddenly failed her: not a note could be heard. The orchestra ceased playing; and the cantatrice, nearly fainting from agitation, made the most violent exertions to recover herself: her chest heaved, her blanched lips quivered, cold drops of perspiration bedewed her brow, but not even a cry of agony escaped her. Her voice was gone!

The curtain was dropped, and the whole house was in consternation. The manager (Mr. Ayrton) appeared, and explained that the sudden indisposition of Madame Fodor must cause the performances to be

suspended for a few minutes, and the audience, indulgent as usual on such an occasion, promised to wait patiently. The dressing-room of the unhappy vocalist was a scene of indescribable confusion. Lying on a sofa, in a frenzy of grief, she was flinging her arms about in the wildest despair, striking her face, tearing her hair, and giving way to her anguish in mute agony: she uttered no audible cries. Rossini fairly wept; and Choron fell on his knees, entreating her to calm her agitation. Half an hour had elapsed, and the house was becoming violent in its impatience. Poor Ayrton then came and informed Madame Fodor that the audience would no longer wait, and that he was about to announce to them that the performance could not proceed. The colour rushed to the face of the cantatrice; her eyes flashed fire, her lips moved convulsively, and springing to her feet, she exclaimed, in a loud, full, and resonant voice,—

"Draw up the curtain, I will sing!"

"Saved! saved!" cried Rossini, embracing her.

The curtain was again raised; and the prima donna entered, and was welcomed by shouts of applause. A profound silence succeeded, and then the audience remained in expectancy. Madame Fodor went through the remainder of the opera; but at the conclusion of the last scene, she fell to the ground in a swoon. On her recovery, she found that her voice was completely gone.

Under these circumstances, she offered to relinquish her engagement; but, hoping to see what they considered the effects of a temporary accident pass away, the administration protested against this. But finding it was hopeless to look forward to the restoration of her powers, they refused to pay her salary. She demanded that they should execute certain clauses of the contract; this they declined, and a process followed, which she gained. The administration then carried the cause to the Conseil d'Etat, and the discussion lasted some time, but was finally terminated by a compromise.

Trusting that beneath the sunny skies of Italy she might once more regain her powers, Madame Fodor, on the conclusion of her dispute with the management of the Italian Theatre of Paris, went to Naples. She did indeed rid herself of the obstinate hoarseness which had destroyed her voice in France, and fancied that she could again sing. She appeared at the San Carlo in 1828, and again in 1831, with Tamburini. But she had grievously deceived herself. At last, convinced that it was hopeless to look forward to any alteration for the better, Madame Fodor retired altogether from the stage, and fixed her abode at Fontainebleau. In November, 1834, the unlucky cantatrice went to Paris and submitted to a trying operation under the hands of Doctor Cruveilhier. The disorder which affected her had placed her life in danger, and her recovery was for a time doubtful.

She still gave concerts, although unable herself to take any part in them. They were held at Fontainebleau, sometimes at the house of Madame Fodor, sometimes at that of Colonel Braque. It was rumoured in 1837 that a skilful surgeon had effected a complete recovery of her vocal organ, and that she had regained all the brilliancy of her execution; but the report was groundless.

In 1857, Madame Fodor published a work entitled *Conseils et Réflexions sur l'Art de Chant*, the result of her knowledge and experience; and she is at present living in Paris.

CHAPTER XVII.

LAURE CINTHIE DAMOREAU.

In the Rue Grange Batelière, Paris, some fifty years ago, there lived a little girl, whose chief pleasure was in studying music after a solitary fashion of her own. This child was Laure Cinthie Montalant, who had been born in this quiet street, February 6, 1801.

Where this little girl had obtained her predilection for music was a mystery; M. Montalant, her father, was a professor of languages, and troubled himself very little about music and musicians; her mother was a wood engraver; and none of the family had ever been known to cherish any liking for the divine art.

Laure had an uncle, the Abbé Jacques, who had been preceptor to the sons of the King of Holland. Perceiving the evident gift Laure had for music, he spoke to his friend M. Henri Plantade, who directed the singing-classes at the Conservatoire. He also took her to Catel, who, looking at the pale, slender child, smiled incredulously when told of her promising talent, and at her earnest declaration that she would like to

be a musician. The illustrious professor asked her to sing, and Laure selected the finale from *Le Nozze di Figaro*, which she repeated with such precision and feeling that Catel was astonished. She was admitted to the Conservatoire, November 28, 1808, in the class for the study of the pianoforte, and soon became a clever pianist. She was then raised to the class for harmony, where her progress was so rapid that Cazot, her teacher, was often perplexed how to supply her with fresh pieces. Her playing was so pure, her expression so elegant, her fingering so agile, by the time she was thirteen, that the committee thought she had no need to become a vocalist, and might be very well satisfied with her proficiency on the pianoforte; they, therefore, obstinately refused to admit her into the singing-class. Laure entreated in vain, and then, vexed by their stern denial, demanded her dismissal.

M. Plantade, her uncle's friend, seeing the real talent of this young girl, came to her rescue. "You want lessons in singing," said the good-hearted professor: "I will give them to you:" and he kept his word. "M. Plantade was assiduous in giving me lessons, with all the care of an excellent musical professor, and all the tenderness of a father," says Laure herself. "My voice, which gave promise of becoming flexible, but which did not then possess much strength, struck him as completely adapted to the Italian style. I studied, therefore, under him, only the old repertoire,

beginning with Durante's Psalms. My master allowed me to sing scarcely three or four French airs; among these latter were the airs of 'Montano et Stephanie,' and 'Beniowski,' true models of a style that is at once simple, expressive, and graceful."

In the house where Laure resided, there was a harp, upon which she commenced playing. Wood-engraving and teaching languages not being, at that period, especially remunerative, the pecuniary resources of the family did not allow of her being supplied with published music, which was very dear at the time. This obliged her to compose studies for herself, and she wrote caprices, rondeaux, and other things, in bold defiance of all known rules, and performed them under the guidance of a musical instinct. She formed a little school, too, where, besides learning singing, her juvenile pupils performed the old *opéras comiques* to an audience of admiring mammas.

When she had attained her fourteenth year, M. Plantade said to her, "My dear girl, you can now do without me. Mark my words: you possess taste, you will adopt what is good in some, and reject what is bad in others." And he dismissed her with encouraging advice.

Uncle Jacques, who felt persuaded of her ability, was anxious to bring her forward, and presented her to the Queen of Holland. Her Majesty received her very kindly, and called her "sa jolie petite

virtuose." The young girl's first steps in the musical world were not, however, very brilliant; some concerts which she gave attracted small notice, for she was unknown, and was not a foreigner. Her voice acquired each day more softness, more purity; and, being an excellent musician, and endowed with a strong instinct for music, she profited by the practical experience she gained by listening to the finished singers who appeared in Paris—particularly those at the Théâtre Italien.

Madame Catalani being then director of the Opera, M. Vallebreque thought that Mdlle. Montalant, as a young unknown singer, would make a most convenient "puppet" to replace Madame Fodor, and he offered her an engagement on one condition—that she should Italianize her name. A very slight alteration changed her name of Cinthie, and at the age of fifteen she appeared as Mdlle. Cinti, in the part of Lilla, in *La Cosa Rara*, one of Madame Fodor's favourite characters.

"Thanks to my extreme youth," she says, "and, above all, to the advice of my dear master, my success was a genuine one. The day on which M. Plantade's unconditional approbation confirmed the applause of the public, was the happiest day of my life. After my successful début, I had many annoyances and prejudices to overcome. I was French: this was almost a crime at the Théâtre Italien! But I was not dis-

couraged. I learnt, in a very short time, nearly fifteen or twenty parts; I understudied (sometimes in a day) the parts of all the prime donne; in the ardour of my zeal, and with my incessant application, I was ready for every score. My adoption of this system proved, one day, highly advantageous to me. Madame Catalani was to appear in an extraordinary performance at the Opera. The full rehearsal was already somewhat advanced, when it was remarked that the great vocalist had not arrived. At the moment the ritournelle of her cavatina announced her entrance on the stage, Barilli, our stage manager, taking my hand, boldly presented me to the orchestra, to sing in the place of our celebrated manageress. Though greatly agitated at first, I felt afterwards very happy, for the orchestra applauded me very much, and it was the first time such an honour had been paid me. When Madame Catalani heard of what I had been bold enough—or, rather, what my devotion to art had prompted me—to do, she thanked me by an embrace; for she was always kind."

The first really important part which was given to Mdlle. Cinti, however, was that of Cherubino, in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, in which opera she performed with Garcia and Madame Catalani. The manner in which she sang the air at the feet of the Countess was much applauded; but the young vocalist was not much noticed by the habitués of the Opera. She wanted

sensibility, they said; she sang like a bird-organ: indeed she *could not* sing well, as she had never visited Italy. However, Laure persevered. Profiting by all she heard, she studied ardently, always hoping for the excellence which she felt she should ultimately attain; and she improved, not rapidly, but with certainty. She was pretty, had much musical knowledge, and a simple and pure taste; as an actress, too, she was easy and unaffected; so by degrees she was entrusted with many good parts: amongst others she performed Rosina, Giulietta, Amenaïde, and Zerlina.

She desired to appear at the Académie Royale de Musique; but she had to contend against Mdlle. Naldi, who was strongly favoured by Signor Viotti, director of the Opera and of the Italiens: a gentleman who had a reputation as a good violinist, and was a respectable wine-merchant, but who proved to be a bad dramatic administrator. In 1822, Mdlle. Cinti was performing still at the Théâtre Italien, in such operas as *La Gazza Ladra*, with Barilli, Bordogni, and Madame Rossi, and was then very popular.

At this time, a noble patron of the King's Theatre heard Mdlle. Cinti, and recommended her to London, where she was engaged by Ebers, with Rosalbina Caradori and Madame Graziani. In May, 1822, she made her appearance as Rosina, in *Il Barbiere di Seviglia*, and was most kindly received. Her exquisite grace, delicacy, feeling, and musical taste and know-

ledge were much admired, though it was regretted that her powers as a singer were so limited. Her beauty and her intelligence as an actress also gained her favour; but she was yet young, her talents were not perfectly developed, and for several reasons she did not make any impression in England. She returned to Paris, however, more confident in her powers; and her salary, hitherto 8,000 francs, was raised to 12,000.

On her return to Paris, she performed in *Il Barbiere di Seviglia*, with Pellegrini, Garcia, Graziani, Profeti, and Levasseur. She also performed in *Il Matrimonio Segreto*, *Don Giovanni*, and in *Romeo e Giulietta*, with Madame Pasta. In November, for Madame Pasta's benefit, Mercadante's *Elisa e Claudio* was represented, when Mdlle. Cinti, in the part of Carlotta, sang with pure taste her pretty cavatina.

The arrival of Rossini in Paris formed a marked era in musical art in France, and was a happy event for Mdlle. Cinti. She was receiving instruction from Bordogni, when the great maestro heard her, and from that time took a special interest in her welfare. His *Mosè in Egitto* was produced October 24, 1822. It did not create the effect which had been anticipated, although Madame Pasta was ably seconded by Madame Rossi and Mdlle. Cinti, and Garcia, in spite of his real illness, exerted himself to the utmost. Levasseur, also, had a part in which he developed all the re-

sources of his fine vocal talent; and the débutant, Zuchelli, who possessed a tenor voice of rare power and of considerable extent, which he managed with extraordinary art, sang splendidly. The comparative failure of this opera is attributable to its want of dramatic interest. *Il Barbiere*, and *La Gazza Ladra*, have each a story full of variety and of dramatic action: an element of success entirely wanting in *Mosè*. This opera, however, crowned Mdlle. Cinti's success—it contained the first part written for her.

Il Viaggio a Reims was produced at the Théâtre Italien, in June, 1825, when Mdlle. Cinti performed with Pasta, Mombelli, and a number of famous Italian singers.

At this time the representations at the Grand Opéra were very wearisome, for the performers did not care to take pains, as they were paid whether they sang well or ill; and they were not encouraged by the public. The Académie, in conversation, was now styled simply l'Opéra; country people designated it the Grand Opéra; and from its situation in the Rue Lepelletier, near the Boulevard, the singers were frequently called *les Chanteurs de la Rue Lepelletier*. Rossini employed his influence to substitute *opéra chanté* for lyric tragedy at the Académie. MM. Persuis and Habeneck, directors of the Italiens and the Académie, intending to change their representations, and perform the works of Rossini, were in want of a

vocalist capable of interpreting his ideas, and, considering that he ought to be the best judge of the kind of singer most calculated to carry out his ideas, readily attended to his suggestions. The reform commenced, then, with the engagement of Mdlle. Cinti and the production of *Le Siége de Corinthe*, which was brought out October 9, 1826. The talents of Mdlle. Cinti and Adolphe Nourrit afforded great resources to the composer; the part of Néocles was Nourrit's first important impersonation. Some misunderstanding, however, having arisen between Mdlle. Cinti and the administration, in the summer of 1827, she abruptly quitted the Opéra. She appeared at Brussels, where she excited great admiration, and there she married M. Damoreau, an actor at the theatre of that city, who made his appearance some time after, but without success, at the Opéra in Paris, and then at the Théâtre Feydeau.

When Auber's greatest work, *La Muette de Portici*, was produced at the Grand Opéra in 1827, Madame Damoreau sustained the somewhat ungrateful part of Elvira, singing the music in a manner which greatly contributed to the success of the piece. In 1828 she was the original representative of the Comtesse de Formontiers in Rossini's charming opera, *Le Comte Ory;* and when his *chef-d'œuvre*, *Guillaume Tell*, was produced in 1829, she performed the character of the heroine, with Nourrit, Levasseur, Alexis Dupont, and Massol.

She next appeared as Fatmé in Auber's *Le Dieu et la Bayadère*, and as Térésine in *Le Philtre* of the same composer. In 1831, M. Véron, then director of the Grand Opéra, produced Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable*. The part of the Princess Isabelle was entrusted to Madame Damoreau, who succeeded in pleasing the manager, the composer, the critics, and the public.

In the summer of 1832, driven away from Paris by the ravages of the cholera, Madame Cinti Damoreau, with Nourrit and Levasseur, came to England; she was engaged at a salary of 100 guineas per night, and appeared May 26, in *La Cenerentola*, with Madame Castelli, Donzelli, and Tamburini, who then made his début in England. She next appeared as Rosina, in *Il Barbiere di Seviglia*, Lablache being the Figaro. "Cinti has greatly improved since our former acquaintance with her," said an English critic; "and not only throughout the part of Rosina, but especially in Rode's variations, introduced as the music lesson, was little inferior to Sontag." She was also very much admired in *La Donna del Lago*, in which she performed with Donzelli and Madame Moriani.

Previous to closing his theatre, after a most disastrous season, the manager, Monck Mason, brought out *Robert le Diable*. He spared nothing which could give it importance and attraction, but spent 6,000*l*. in mounting it. The scenery painted for the opera by

Messrs. Grieve was magnificent; the convent scene being only eclipsed by that with which the piece terminates—an interior of the Cathedral of Palermo. Meyerbeer himself came to London expressly to superintend the production of his opera, but, through various delays, was obliged to leave for Berlin without attending a single rehearsal. At last it was produced on Monday, June 11, with only three changes in the original cast—Madame de Meric taking the part of Alice, while the light and brilliant Heberlé undertook the character of the Abbess, "created" by Taglioni.

Shortly after the production of *Robert le Diable*, Madame Damoreau refused to perform for 100 guineas a night; the part of Isabelle was therefore given to Mdlle. Schneider, and that of Raimbaut omitted altogether. Madame Damoreau returned to Paris; but the following year, 1833, she revisited London, and reappeared at the King's Theatre, in *La Cenerentola*, with Tamburini, Zuchelli, and Donzelli. She performed also in *La Gazza Ladra*, with Rubini, Tamburini, and Zuchelli; in *Tancredi*, with Madame Pasta, Rubini, and Zuchelli; and in *Don Giovanni*, with Mesdames Castelli and De Meric, Tamburini, Donzelli, Giubilei, and De Begnis. This was her last visit to England.

In October, 1834, after a long illness, Madame Damoreau returned to the Theâtre de l'Opéra, in Paris, when she was received with acclamation in *Robert le*

Diable. She continued to appear at the Grand Opéra, the Opéra Comique, and in the provinces, until the year 1841, when (on the 8th May) she made her farewell appearance at the Opéra Comique. The house was crowded to the doors, and she received the warmest demonstrations of admiration and respect. In the same year she visited St. Petersburg, and, on her return, continued to sing for some time longer in the provinces. In 1843 she finally retired from the stage, but commenced a fresh career as a concert-singer; in which capacity she visited America, creating a furore in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and New Orleans. On her return she accepted the post of Professor of Singing at the Conservatoire; and, in 1849, she published her *Méthode de Chant*, a valuable work, which was adopted by that institution. She had previously published an *Album de Romances*, which contains some very charming compositions. She had many pupils, several of whom became distinguished in their art.

She now resides, in honoured retirement, in Paris.

CHAPTER XVIII.

VIOLANTE CAMPORESE.

VIOLANTE CAMPORESE, born at Rome, in 1785, was one of the most brilliant and popular singers of the beginning of the present century. Of gentle birth, she had cultivated music merely as an elegant accomplishment, making herself, however, completely mistress of the art; but unforeseen misfortunes compelled her to convert into a profession what had been merely a recreation, and she became a public singer; appearing in the first instance only at concerts. She was then the wife of Signor Giustiniani, a gentleman of noble family, the head of which was alone prevented by his foreign birth from claiming the Scotch earldom of Newburgh, which would have been his by right of female descent. Madame Camporese—for she always retained her maiden name in public—had never appeared at any theatre till she was engaged for the private concerts of Napoleon; she sang also at the Concert Spirituel. Endowed with a powerful soprano voice of great flexibility, she had already, on arriving in Paris, developed

remarkable talent, which was perfected yet more by the friendly instructions of Crescentini.

Ebers, while in Paris, was introduced to Madame Camporese in the autumn of 1816, at the house of the celebrated composer Paer. "She did me the favour to sing, accompanied by that great master on the piano," says Ebers. "She possesses a fine-toned voice, of rather more than two octaves, reaching from B and C in alt, down to B and A below, but the notes could be called good from C to F only, the others not being fine in their quality. She cultivated a pure, chaste, and expressive style, was a handsome and elegant woman of one-and-thirty, with dark hair, eyes, and complexion, a tall slender figure, a fine Roman countenance full of tragic dignity, and features rather strongly marked. Her manner had a stately grace and irresistible sweetness. The purity and force of her singing, the exquisite quality of her voice, were united to an execution refined, polished, and free from any effort at display."

From Paris she went to Milan, where she sang at La Scala, and the theatre was crowded nightly while her engagement lasted. Both as a singer and as a woman she was admired, and many anecdotes are told of her kindness of heart and the excellence of her disposition. Ebers relates one:—"An intimate acquaintance waited on her one morning to make a request. In the hospital for the insane, a man was confined,

literally *fanatico per la musica;* he had lost his senses on the failure of an opera, in which the labours of the composer were greater than the excellence of his music. This unfortunate man had by some accident heard of Camporese, whose fame filled the city, and immediately conceived an ungovernable wish to hear her. For awhile his solicitations passing unnoticed, he grew ungovernable, and had to be fastened to his bed: in this state, Camporese's friend had beheld him. She was dressed for an evening party when this representation was made to her, but she paused a moment on hearing it. Then throwing a cloak over her shoulders, said, 'Come then.' 'Whither?' 'To the Ospedale.' 'But why? There is no occasion to go now—to-morrow, or the next day.' 'To-morrow—no, indeed, if I can do this poor man good, let me go instantly.' And they went. Being shown into a room, separated from that of the maniac musician by a thin wall, Camporese began to sing one of Haydn's melodies. The attendants in the next room observed their patient suddenly become less violent, then composed; at last he burst into tears. The singer now entered; she sat down, and sang again. When she had concluded, the poor composer took from under his bed a torn sheet of paper, scored with an air of his own composition, and handed it to her. There were no words, nothing in the music, but Camporese, running it over, sang it to some words of Metastasio, with such sweetness that

the music seemed excellent. 'Sing it me once more,' said the maniac. She did so, and departed accompanied by his prayers and the tears of the spectators."

In 1817 she was engaged at the King's Theatre; the company consisting besides of Madame Fodor, Madame Pasta, Crivelli, Begrez, Naldi, Angrisani, and Ambrogetti. Crivelli was a tenor of the old school, with a sonorous, mellow voice of considerable power, clearness, and flexibility. Some of his tones were excellent, but having lost much of his power he was sometimes obliged to force his voice, thus spoiling the effect of a performance in other respects admirable. Ambrogetti, who had a deep, flexible, and rich voice, which filled the theatre with ease, sang with much sweetness and fervour; some of his tones were exceedingly pure, his ear was correct, and he was free and spirited in his acting. He had a fine manly figure, well-marked features, and a dashing air, and possessed also a natural vein of humour, which rendered his acting very animated and vivacious.

On the 11th January, 1817, Madame Camporese appeared before an English audience, with Pasta and Crivelli, in Cimarosa's serious but heavy opera of *Penelope*, then performed for the first time in England. As an actress she was not impassioned or powerful, but always judicious and correct, natural, and sometimes striking. She had a gentle, dignified manner, and "she expressed feelings as her education told her they

ought to be expressed; and if she seldom commanded the tears of her audience, she always had their judgment in her favour." Her singing was of the pure and "fine Italian school;" and her execution was distinguished by good taste, which prevented her overtasking her powers. Her voice being deficient in compass, however, often led her to substitute one passage for another, and her highest notes were produced with difficulty and not without some slight imperfections, for they were rather weak, and occasionally uneven: had her voice been finer, she would have attained to the very highest rank as a vocalist. Her taste was pure, and she preferred the legitimate to the spurious attributes of expression, though the fashion of the day compelled her to yield in some slight degree to the rage for ornamentation; but unlike most of the singers of her time, she paid the utmost deference to the text of her part, and did not attempt to improve it by fanciful embellishments.

The following critique of Madame Camporese's singing, from the *Quarterly Musical Review*, is just and discriminating:—"Her intonation is generally good, though not infallible; and when it falters we should attribute the defect to indisposition, or casual failure of the throat, rather than to the slightest error of judgment or to want of ear, for Madame Camporese's science is indisputable. It is alike manifest in what she does and in what she declines. She never attempts

in the way of ornament what she cannot perfectly execute; which we esteem not only to be one of the strongest proofs of a knowledge of the art, but of a quality even much more rare—self-knowledge. In the blaze of execution, which is the passion of the present day, Madame Camporese does not affect to revel or delight. She is capable of performing passages in a legitimate method of the best school—either *legato* or *staccato*, as she wills—but hers is the true manner, and with what we should term deep-seated articulation, which is never so excessively rapid or so brilliant as that which is performed by the agency of the throat with little aid from the chest. Neither is her voice of the very flexible kind that yields with equal facility to all sorts of divisions. Catalani takes her hearers by storm, Camporese wins by more quiet, more regular, but not less certain approaches. Upon the stage her mild and modest sweetness is not a little aided by the enchanting softness of her eyes, and by the exquisite sensibility that illuminates her features; while in the more quiet exhibitions of the orchestra she has the lady-like air that distinguishes her amiable and truly praiseworthy conduct in the walks of private life, to which she is no less an ornament than to the profession she dignifies."

"Her sensibility is uncommonly apprehensive," observes the same critic; "and she embodies her feelings in the purest language of sound. Her

decoration is simple and powerful, and she never utters a word or a note in vain. She sings to the heart, and conveys even in the little ornament she uses the power of expressiveness. And elocution or execution, under her dominion, ministers to conception, as displayed in intellectual grace and a rich but cultivated fancy. Her polished judgment can distinguish, her taste is satisfied; and, therefore, her ambition can be content with moving the high affections. In a word, she knows and she supports the dignity of her mind and her art."

"Camporese's voice," says Lord Mount Edgecumbe, "if not of the very finest quality, is extremely agreeable, of sufficient power and compass, and capable of considerable agility. Her singing is regulated by good taste, and is full of feeling and expression. In short, she is worthy of the best days of the art, and, when she first came to this country, had in no degree adopted the modern style. She then sang only in the compositions of the best masters, and her execution of them was faultless."

At first Madame Camporese was extremely embarrassed, and did not make much impression; but in her next part her fears were dispelled, and she showed that her deficiency had been caused merely by want of knowledge of the usages of the theatre. As Susanna, in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, she completely established her reputation, notwithstanding she succeeded

Madame Vestris in the character. Though Madame Camporese could not vie with her fascinating predecessor in archness or playfulness of manner, she more than compensated for that inferiority by her vocalization; and she infused a graceful humour into her performance. Madame Fodor was the Countess, and Pasta, Cherubino. *Don Giovanni* was the next opera in which Madame Camporese appeared, and her acting and singing in the character of Donna Anna were pathetic and beautiful.

In May, *L'Agnese*, by Paer, the story of which was taken from Mrs. Opie's "Father and Daughter," was brought out. The melodies of this opera were numerous, and those which belonged to the character of Agnese were given with great purity and pathos by Madame Camporese, who seemed to improve in each new part. "She seems inexhaustible in the most tasteful embellishments and passages, which she delivers with the most fascinating purity and delicacy of musical feeling," observed one critic. Ambrogetti's representation of the unhappy father was almost appalling: it was so horrible a representation of insanity that it created a very painful sensation. It was said that he visited Bedlam, and studied the expression of some of the maniacs there confined, but in endeavouring to make his representation vivid, he rendered it too shocking. Some ladies fainted, others left the theatre, and even the performers on the stage were seen to

shed tears—a phenomenon witnessed for the first time. The consequence was, that after a few nights, the opera was discontinued.

In July, *La Clemenza di Tito* was given, Camporese representing the leading male part—Sesto. The noble contour of her face was in perfect unison with the character, and her performance was irreproachable. Lord Mount Edgecumbe declared that she gave more effect to the part than either Braham or Trammezzani had done. Vitellia was performed by Madame Fodor, and the two vocalists were constantly singing together during the opera, thus affording unqualified delight by the combined beauty of their voices and their expressive acting. Madame Camporese also sung on alternate nights with Madame Fodor, at the Ancient Music and at the Philharmonic Concerts.

Ayrton, the manager, though supported by the public, finding himself unable to contend against the cabals and intrigues of the performers, retired at the end of the season; and after a career of unexampled and splendid prosperity, was compelled to have recourse to an action at law for the remuneration due to him for his services. Madame Campcrese also, who had largely contributed to the prosperity of the season, was allowed to depart without any arrangement being made for her return; but this arose from negligence: Mr. Waters wished to retain her; but his letter offering terms having miscarried, Signor Giustiniani

and Madame Camporese signed articles with the theatre at Milan.

In August, she appeared at La Scala, with Rubini, Crivelli, and Madame Festa, in *La Clemenza di Tito*, and other operas. Madame Camporese also sang at Rovigo and Venice, in August, 1819, with the contralto Bonini, and Bonoldi. In November she was again at Milan, with Crivelli and Remorini, and in the following December the first performance of Rossini's *Bianca e Faliero* took place, when Madame Camporese appeared as Bianca, and Carolina Bassi as Faliero.

Her absence from the King's Theatre had been universally regretted, and she was engaged by Mr. Waters to perform in London during the season of 1821, for which she was to receive 1,550*l.*, and Ebers, who undertook the management, consented to allow her an additional sum weekly for dresses. She desired permission to sing at all concerts, and this being granted, she requested to have her salary paid in advance, which was also gratified; it is but justice to add that she took no advantage of the facility with which her demands were agreed to.

"Few public performers," says Ebers, "have received the same degree of countenance in private circles as Madame Camporese. She was treated by persons of the first quality with all the respect and attention befitting her talent and character, mingling in their entertainments, not as merely tolerated, but

recognized as one whose respectable birth and connections qualified her to mix in polite society. The Countess St. Antonio, one of the most distinguished patronesses of the Italian Opera, was her firm friend; so were the Marquis and Marchioness of Bristol; and a number of celebrated names might be added."

The affairs of the King's Theatre becoming deranged, it was not opened till the 10th March, when Rossini's opera, *La Gazza Ladra*, was performed for the first time in England, Madame Camporese appearing as Ninetta. It was observed that her singing and acting had visibly improved during her three years' absence, and her taste and execution were greatly admired. The popular cavatina "Di piacer" had been hackneyed at every concert in the kingdom for the preceding three years, yet, as sung by Madame Camporese, and in its appropriate place in the opera, it was exquisitely fresh and charming; and in her prayer in the last scene, she affected the fashionable audience to tears.

As Liston believed his genius lay in tragedy, so the dignified, stately Madame Camporese fancied that she should shine in comic as well as in serious parts, and fired with ambition, probably from witnessing the charming impersonations of Ronzi di Begnis, she made up her mind that she too would prove her versatility. In Mozart's operas, as in many of Shakspeare's plays, there is a choice of first parts for the leading performers: the Countess and Susanna in *Figaro*,

Donna Anna and Zerlina in *Don Giovanni*, are of equal importance. As the Countess, Madame Camporese was dignified and high-bred, and as Donna Anna she was truthful and impressive; but not a scintillation of the *vis comica* enlivened her countenance: indeed her style was altogether serious; yet as Catalani had performed the arch Susanna, and Fodor, by her beauty and vivacity, rendered the coquettish Zerlina popular, Madame Camporese insisted that she also should play gay and graceful characters. She therefore resigned her own repertoire to Madame Ronzi di Begnis, who thus had an opportunity of displaying her versatility and sprightliness, and commenced with performing Zerlina. However, she had the good sense not to persevere in her mistake.

In 1822 Madame Camporese was again engaged; the new singers were Mdlle Cinti, and Mesdames Caradori and Graziani. Rosalbina Caradori was an excellent singer, and considered a valuable acquisition to the theatre. "With those whose object it is to be pleased rather than astonished," remarks Ebers, "Caradori is a leading favourite. The mellow sweetness of her voice, so soft, so touching, was united with the truest expression of the feeling of what she sang; nor did she ever sing without calling forth emotions at once tender and powerful in all who heard her." As an actress she was graceful and elegant. These three new performers, together with Camporese and Ronzi

di Begnis, constituted the female corps of the Opera; the male singers of the last season were retained, with the addition of Cartoni and Cerutti: Cartoni, a baritone, having been engaged at the recommendation of Madame Camporese.

The King's Theatre was now under the direction of a committee of noblemen, Mr. Ebers being the proprietor. It opened the 12th January with *Le Nozze di Figaro*, in which Madame Camporese, Ronzi di Begnis, Ambrogetti, and Placci, and Signora Caradori, appeared. Madame Camporese earned fresh laurels by her performance of Desdemona in Rossini's *Otello*. The purity and force of her singing, the tenderness and delicacy of her expression in this character, elicited universal admiration; and it was among the highest of her triumphs.

The Vocal Concerts, conducted by Messrs. Knyvett and Greatorex, having expired at the end of this season, a new series was projected by them at the Argyll Rooms; their professed object being "to rescue our national music from perishing in the vast vortex of the Italian Opera." But, with singular inconsistency, they engaged Madame Camporese, an *Italian*, from the King's Theatre, as their principal singer; overlooking the numerous brilliant English vocalists who were then popular, including Miss Stephens, Miss Paton, and Mrs. Salmon.

Madame Camporese was engaged again at the King's

Theatre in 1823, and steadily resisted as far as possible the rage for fioriture, which the resplendent execution of Billington, the almost unlimited powers of Catalani, and the extraordinary popularity of Rossini's compositions had brought into fashion. At a provincial meeting in the January of this year, she sang "Ah, perdona" with another vocalist eminent for facility of florid execution, and after the rehearsal Madame Camporese remarked to a lady with whom she was conversing, that the vocal ornamentation of her competitor was likely to carry off all the applause. "But," added the judicious and sensitive Italian, "so it must be, for I really cannot—nor dare not—insert a note in a melody so beautiful." This prognostication, however, was not fulfilled, "for Madame Camporese bore off the palm, and received the marked plaudits of the audience as the reward of her sound judgment and really fine taste."

The critics, indeed, were now loudly complaining of the excessive ornamentation with which most singers disfigured their performances. "Great artists," said one, "lead and form the general taste. The florid style, though it has obtained in England, has never been seriously appreciated. Judgment abjures it both in theory and practice. It is always mentioned in abatement rather than in exaltation of the merits of the individuals who indulge in its exercise. It has formed a great drawback upon Braham's reputation, though it

may have added to his popularity. In Garcia it is considered as a means (most scientifically used, indeed) of covering the ravages of time. In Sinclair it is thought perfectly despicable."

For her benefit, Madame Camporese brought out Rossini's *Ricciardo e Zoraïde*, which gave great satisfaction. She was also much admired in Mercadante's *Elisa e Claudio*, a light and pleasing opera. On the 5th August, she took her leave in *Ricciardo e Zoraïde*, on the conclusion of which, she was rewarded with the most enthusiastic plaudits. She was engaged for the York Festival, but felt herself obliged to relinquish the undertaking, from the delicate state of her health, which demanded a warmer climate.

In 1824, Madame Camporese again returned to London, but her voice had *aged*. Sontag and Malibran, in the bloom of their beauty, their talent, and their vocal powers, were then at the King's Theatre, and Pasta had the musical world at her feet.

Madame Camporese was a sensible woman, and the last person in the world to make herself ridiculous. She plainly saw the time had arrived for her to retire, and she gracefully took leave and went to Rome to pass an honourable and peaceful life in the enjoyment of the ease which she had nobly earned. Once only was she drawn from her retirement to public life. In September, 1827, she sang at the Teatro delle Muse, Ancona, in Rossini's *Aureliano in Palmira*.

Madame Camporese resided at Rome under her proper name of Giustiniani, living in strict retirement, and never singing out of her own house. She was pleased to have opportunities of showing civilities to the English visitors, and gracefully testified her consciousness that to England she owed her celebrity.

CHAPTER XIX.

ROSAMUNDA PISARONI.

At Plaisance, a town in the department of Gers, in the south of France, was born, February 6, 1795, Rosamunda Benedetta Pisaroni, one of the most striking examples of innate genius and perseverance overcoming the most discouraging disadvantages that could impede the career of a vocalist.

An obscure master named Pino gave Pisaroni her first lessons, and at the age of twelve she was placed under the direction of the soprano Moschini, then in the service of the Viceroy of Italy at Milan. Having acquired from him the art of singing, according to the principles of the ancient school, she received finishing lessons from Marchesi, who imparted to her that largeness of style, that breadth and power, which characterized the admired school of the eighteenth century. One day, after a lesson entirely dedicated to studying a single phrase of recitative, Marchesi exclaimed to his pupil, with a sigh which came from his heart, "We poor singers have much to complain

of. In youth we have voice and ardour without experience, and, when experience has arrived, voice and ardour have vanished." Owing to the judicious counsels of this celebrated master, Rosamunda became a great singer, spite of the defects of her vocal organ, and of an appearance rendered almost repulsive by the ravages of small-pox.

Most of her biographers have affirmed that her voice was originally a contralto, which gradually extended its register upwards; but it was exactly the reverse. When Madame Pisaroni made her début at Bergamo in the summer of 1811, at the age of sixteen, she performed as a high soprano in the parts of Griselda, Camilla, and others of the répertoire of that period. She was much applauded at Bergamo, and was invited to Verona in the following season, where the success which she obtained spread her name through Italy. Towards the end of 1812 she went to Palermo, meeting with a warm welcome; and was called to Parma at the commencement of 1813. Here she had a long and serious illness. She lost some of the upper notes of her voice, while on the contrary the lower tones acquired extent and force. Obliged to renounce her first engagements as soprano, she took those for a contralto, and after a time her voice acquired such depth and mellowness of tone, that she might have justly claimed the title of the first contralto in Italy, but for some notes with an unpleasant guttural accent.

At Padua, in 1818, Meyerbeer, then a very young man, wrote for Pisaroni his *Romilda e Costanza*. The Paduans, desirous of showing favour to Meyerbeer, gave a brilliant welcome to his work, recognizing the merits of the musician and the talent of the singer. Pisaroni then went to the San Carlo, where she appeared in Rossini's *Ricciardo e Zoraide*. In January, 1819, she was again at Naples. Mercadante's opera of *Lodoiska* was written for her début; and the singer was applauded, but the music was not liked. In October of the same year, she appeared as Malcolm in *La Donna del Lago*. The entrance of Malcolm in the first act is accompanied by a fanfare of trumpets; and when, above the clang of the instruments, the loud, clear, firm, and full tones of Madame Pisaroni's voice were heard distinctly, an electric effect was produced on the audience.

In 1822, Madame Pisaroni was in Milan with Lablache. Meyerbeer composed for them his *L'Esule di Granata;* but there was so much delay in preparing this opera, that it was not brought out till the end of the Carnival. This was the cause of its being nearly condemned, and it was only saved by a duet between Pisaroni and Lablache in the second act.

In the spring of 1823, Pisaroni appeared at the Teatro Argentina, Rome, in Rossini's *Donna del Lago*, and in November of the same year she performed at Lucca, with Madame Ferlotti and Tacchinardi, when

Pacini wrote for them an opera called *Temistocle*. She again sang at the Argentina in the beginning of 1824, at Bologna in the early summer, and then returned to the Argentina, where the *Zoraide di Granata* of Donizetti, produced two years previously at that theatre, was revived with new airs and concerted pieces. In 1825, Madame Pisaroni was at Milan, when *La Donna del Lago* was reproduced with considerable effect, and was followed by *Semiramide*, and other operas, and in the beginning of 1826 she was singing at Genoa.

After singing at Genoa, Leghorn, Florence, and Rome, Pisaroni arrived in 1827 at Paris.

The Parisian Opera and the Théâtre Italien were, in 1826, under the direction of M. le Vicomte Sosthenes de Rochefoucault. The Grand Opéra had altogether decayed. From 1822 to 1826 the ballet alone sustained the establishment, and so bad had the music become, that a Parisian wit proposed the following inscription for the façade of the theatre: "This is the Paradise of the eyes, and the Hell of the ears." At last M. le Vicomte was struck with the happy idea of bringing forward the *chefs-d'œuvre* of French music, and Glück's *Armida* was accordingly revived in 1826; but on the third night it was played to empty benches. M. le Vicomte relinquished the administration of both Opera-houses in 1827, and was replaced by M. Lubert, a man of talent and decision, who commenced operations vigorously. He engaged

Malibran, who had just arrived in Paris from America, and he also engaged Pisaroni, about whom there was great excitement among the amateurs.

Madame Pisaroni made her début in the character of Arsace, in *Semiramide*. This opera, which contains some magnificent passages, and so many beautiful melodies, was well suited to display to every advantage the rich endowments of the superb contralto. "I shall never," says Fétis, "forget the effect which she produced on the audience when she came on the stage, and, turning her back to the public, gazing at the interior of the temple, uttered in a sonorous voice, admirably *posée*, this phrase, *Eccomi alfin in Babilonia!* Unanimous transports welcomed these vigorous accents, and this large manner, so rare in our days; but when the singer turned and exposed to view her features, disfigured by small pox, a sort of cry of terror succeeded to the enthusiasm, and the spectators closed their eyes, to enjoy the talent without being obliged to look at the performer." Then a mingled storm of applause and laughter arose, but before the end of the representation her genius had obtained a complete victory; for the full and sonorous voice of Madame Pisaroni displayed an infinity of fine effects whereof no previous Arsace had dreamt. The fulness and fervour of her tones, the vigour and finish of her style, the breadth and force of her impersonation of the character, exercised an irresistible charm; and dazzled by her splendid

talent, the audience soon ceased to think of the forbidding lineaments of Madame Pisaroni.

This admirable singer always bore the remarks on her want of beauty with good humour, and it is said that, when applied to by the management to sing at Paris, she sent her portrait, saying that she was even uglier than her likeness.

"The purity and uniformity of her tone," says one writer; "the noble simplicity of her declamation; the accurate articulation both of syllables and sounds; the gradual melting and assimilation of tone from the most powerful 'messa di voce' to the softest pianissimo; always in keeping, and never violent; the retention of legitimate and the rejection of meretricious ornament; and, lastly, the power of bending all these elements to the changeful purposes of expression, declared at once the mind, the training, and the experience of the gifted artist." Madame Pisaroni's intonation was perfect, her voice was pure, rich—particularly in the lower part of the scale—sweet, and uniform. "This last attribute is the more extraordinary, because the rule of formation, the preservation of a similar position of the lips and other parts of the mouth during the production of the voice, is rarely observed for a second of time by this lady. The change is indeed so manifest as to afford matter for curious inquiry. Her voice has great volume, but it has not the imposing power of Catalani, or even of Pasta."

Her second part in Paris was that of Malcolm, in which she re-established the beautiful cavatina which Madame Pasta had transplanted to *Otello*. Pisaroni appeared with Malibran, August 1, in a new opera by Morlacchi, *Tebaldo ed Isolina*. There was a decided jealousy between Malibran and Pisaroni, or at least, between their partisans. One night they appeared together in *Semiramide*, when each sought to display her gifts to the greatest advantage. In the grand duo, there arose between these two wonderful artistes one of those chivalrous combats which leave their traces in the memory of amateurs. "Madame Malibran, who had the impetuosity and caprice of a genius entirely spontaneous," says Scudo, "had accumulated on the phrase of the allegro of this fine morceau all the wealth of a florid vocalization, with which the audience were more dazzled than charmed. In responding to her young and glorious rival, Madame Pisaroni sang with such simplicity, breadth of style, and concentrated emotion, that she changed places with the Queen of Babylon; especially when they heard a dilettante exclaim, '*Bravo! questo è il vero canto!*' ('This is the true method of singing!'") The public were bewildered, and a momentary silence broke immediately into a tornado of applause.

In 1828 there arose at the Théâtre Italien one of those bitter musical contests such as occurred between Handel and Porpora, Cuzzoni and Faustina, Farinelli

and Senesino, Glück and Piccini, Mara and Todi, Fodor and Pasta. The combatants on this occasion ranged themselves under the respective standards of Pisaroni and Sontag, and gave unequivocal signs both of enthusiasm and injustice. The artistes, driven to rivalry in spite of themselves by their partisans, and urged to fresh efforts, were heard to the utmost advantage. The two operas in which the talents of Madame Pisaroni and Mdlle. Sontag were chiefly brought into contrast were *La Donna del Lago* and *Tancredi*, and in both there was a wide field for the display of the peculiar gifts of each. In the celebrated duet from *Bianca e Faliero*, which was introduced into the *Donna del Lago*, Mdlle. Sontag was particularly happy in some of her closing passages, and it was remarked with pleasure that Madame Pisaroni (now called the Veteran, from her knowledge of the stage) frequently gave a smile of encouragement to her young rival; for they were not vindictive foes, but rather like two generous competitors, contending for the sake of fame.

Madame Pisaroni was engaged in 1829 at the King's Theatre, then under the management of Laporte, with Sontag and Malibran. The tenor was Donzelli, a Bolognese, at that time thirty years of age, and who had sung for some years in Italy. Mercadante had written for him his opera of *Elisa e Claudio*. At Vienna, in 1822, he had produced a sensation which attracted the attention of the directors of the Théâtre

Italien in Paris, who engaged him, and he had come from thence to London. His voice was a pure tenor of great compass, capable of much variety of inflection, and he possessed musical taste and discrimination. There was a fulness and richness in his tones, and an equality in his high and low notes which rendered his singing unsurpassed in smoothness and beauty.

On the 31st January Madame Pisaroni made her first appearance in England, as Malcolm, in Rossini's opera, *La Donna del Lago*, the character which had so greatly contributed to raise her musical and dramatic fame in Europe. Mdlle. Monticelli, another débutante, performed Elena. When Madame Pisaroni appeared in the picturesque costume of Malcolm, she was received with a burst of applause, and the power and brilliancy of her voice, combined with her dramatic talent, more than compensated for defects in physical attributes; for it was immediately apparent that her musical taste and dramatic tact were perfect. It was also perceived, however, that her voice was worn and somewhat exhausted: its youthful freshness was gone, and it had evidently been tried by continual efforts; and with all her consummate art, the gifted cantatrice was unable to conceal this painful fact. "Still, there is nothing offensive to the ear," the critics acknowledged; "nothing that takes from the expression. The feeling is that there was a period when it was probably more beautiful—beautiful as it remains."

In *L'Italiana in Algieri*, which was revived Feb. 17, Pisaroni performed Isabella, and the influence of dress was here strikingly exemplified, for in a plain brown silk dress and a fashionable white hat she looked almost handsome. Her singing was delightful, and she acted with so much animation and comic humour that the house re-echoed with laughter.

In Rossini's *Ricciardo e Zoraide*, injudiciously compressed into one act, Madame Pisaroni appeared as Zomira, in a superb costume, to overcome as far as possible her personal defects; but she had not much opportunity of displaying her fine vocal powers. For her benefit, on May 14, she selected *Semiramide*, and appeared as Arsace; Sontag personating the Assyrian Queen. Pisaroni appeared on one occasion (May 25) with Malibran, in *Semiramide*, and the performance of these two magnificent artistes in this opera will long be remembered by those who heard it.

On the termination of the season Madame Pisaroni left England and never returned. Notwithstanding her acknowledged powers, she had been a comparative failure; partly owing to the unfortunate selection of operas, and partly to the habit English audiences had (at *that* time) of "hearing with their eyes, and looking for an accomplished singer only in the face."

Madame Pisaroni sang during the season of 1829–30 at the Théâtre Italien, with Malibran and Sontag; and in the summer of 1830 she was singing at La Scala,

with Pasta, Giuditta Grisi, Luciano Fornasari, Rubini, Lablache and Davide. From Milan, Pisaroni went to Cadiz (in 1830), where she stayed two years. In 1835 and 1836, she sang again in Turin, but not meeting with the favour which had hitherto welcomed her, she wisely determined on retiring to her native town, where she lived in well-earned and honourable ease.

The career of this magnificent singer and actress illustrates the power possessed by vocal and histrionic talents, combined in perfection, to overcome the impression of personal defects; at the same time exemplifying the influence which female beauty exerts over the public, especially the audiences of operatic performances. The charms of a lovely countenance and graceful form are a source of pleasure to the mind as well as the eye; and audiences of refined taste, whose perceptions have been rendered highly sensitive by the "concord of sweet sounds," cannot but be powerfully, if unconsciously, influenced by the personal attractions of a singer. Indeed, the appearance of a beautiful woman, set off with all the aids of elegant costume on the lyric stage, and delighting the eye by her graceful gestures, while the ear is charmed with the most exquisite vocal and instrumental music, exercises a fascination which is irresistible: it more often occurs that vocal deficiencies are overlooked where the singer is attractive

in person and manner, than that personal defects are lost sight of in the blaze of brilliant talents. On the stage, the eye must be gratified; for it is through the eye as well as the ear, that the mind is affected in opera.

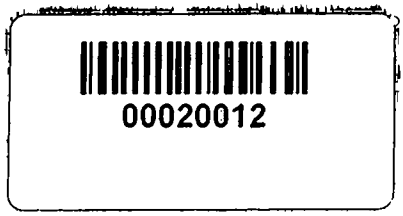
That Madame Pisaroni succeeded in overcoming the startling effect of her ugly face and ungainly figure, is a powerful test of the force of her genius, manifested in the surprising beauty and grandeur of her lyric performances. Indeed, the effect of her singing and acting was such as to produce a reaction in her favour, and her audience soon ceased to regard her personal disadvantages when under the sway of her commanding powers. The same magical influence that made play-goers of a former generation think

"Pritchard genteel and Garrick six feet high,"

and that caused those of a later day, when under the powerful spell of the elder Kean's fiery genius, to lose all consciousness of his small stature, was exerted by Madame Pisaroni.

Not only was the critical ear of the musician satisfied, but the most languid listener was charmed, and her energetic acting in some instances showed "the deformed transformed" into the ideal character she personated.

END OF VOL. I.


00020012

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 19 September, 2016